

# Dads face guilt about workouts, just like moms do

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Both parents tend to view exercise as a selfish behavior that takes up family time, researcher says.

(HealthDay)—Fathers face many of the same family and work barriers to exercise as mothers, new research indicates.

"A decline or lack of [exercise](#) among working parents has mostly been recognized as a female issue. The ethic of care theory—that females have been socialized to meet everyone else's needs before their own—explains why women feel guilty when they take time to exercise, though the same principle hasn't been studied for fathers," study author Emily Mailey, a kinesiology researcher at Kansas State University, said in a university news release.

She asked mothers and fathers about the barriers they face in trying to

establish a regular exercise program, and found that lack of time and guilt were the main obstacles for both.

"The guilt parents feel is because they think of exercise as a [selfish behavior](#). Fathers reported guilt related to family and taking time for themselves, whereas mothers reported guilt related to family, taking time for themselves and work," Mailey said.

"Fathers mentioned feeling guilty about not spending time with their spouses. That really didn't come up for the women. The men felt guilty about exercising after the kids go to bed because that would be time they could spend with their wives," she added.

Mothers were more likely than fathers to say that work and scheduling prevented them from exercising. Many [fathers](#) were able to find time to exercise during the workday, but mothers were less likely to do so because they worried about being judged by their co-workers for leaving to exercise, and lacked time to freshen up after a workout.

"A lot of active dads were taking time during the lunch hour or during the workday to exercise. Moms felt more guilt for taking time out of the workday to the extent that most weren't doing it. If moms were active, they were exercising first thing in the morning," Mailey said.

The study was published online recently in the journal *BioMed Central Public Health*.

"Regardless of their activity levels, parents view their families as the top priority. Active parents were able to see exercise as something that contributed to the good of the family and that was not at odds with being good parents. As a result, they felt less guilty about taking time to exercise and were more apt to prioritize physical activity because they valued the benefits," Mailey said.

**More information:** The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [exercise](#).

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