

Children's Obesity is Exacerbated by COVID-19: A Study

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Introduction

Lockdowns imposed around the world in response to the COVID-19 epidemic have had a negative influence on children with obesity's diet, sleep, and physical activity.

The children ate an extra meal per day, slept an extra half hour per day, spent nearly five hours per day in front of phone, computer, and television displays, and consumed significantly more red meat, sugary drinks, and junk foods than they did a year before.

Physical activity, on the other hand, has declined by over two hours per week, while vegetable consumption has remained constant.

Researcher said that the devastating COVID-19 epidemic has far-reaching consequences that go beyond direct viral infection," says Myles Faith, PhD, a UB childhood obesity researcher and study co-author. "Obese children and teens are put in an uncomfortable situation of isolation, which appears to produce an unfavourable atmosphere for maintaining healthy lifestyle practices.

He went on to say that identifying these negative side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown is crucial in avoiding the depreciation of hard-won weight-control efforts among overweight youths.

According to Faith, children and adolescents gain more weight during the summer vacation than during the school year, which caused the researchers to wonder if being homebound would have a similar impact on the kids' lifestyle choices.

School environments, according to research, provide discipline and routine around mealtimes, physical exercise, and sleep — three major lifestyle factors linked to obesity risk.

The researchers questioned 41 obese children and teenagers in Verona, Italy, who were part of a long-term study. Three weeks into Italy's mandated national lockdown, lifestyle data on nutrition, activity, and sleep were collected and compared to data on children collected in 2019. Physical activity, screen time, sleep, eating habits, and the consumption of red meat, pasta, snacks, fruits, and vegetables were all included in the survey.

The findings supported the negative shift in behaviour, demonstrating that children with obesity perform worse at home on weight-control lifestyle programmes than when they are enrolled in school.

If better practises are not re-established, the excess weight accumulated during the lockdown may not be easily reversible and may contribute to obesity in adulthood. This is because childhood and adolescent obesity tends to follow people throughout their lives and predicts adult weight status.

When deciding when and how to loosen restrictions, government authorities and lawmakers should consider the potential detrimental impacts of lockdowns on obese kids, according to experts. He went on to say that telemedicine programmes that urge families to keep healthy lifestyle choices during times of lockdown should be established and evaluated.

Researchers are evaluating a family-based treatment for children obesity utilising telemedicine technology, which allows patients to be treated in the comfort of their own homes, in a study supported by the National Institutes of Health.

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