



## Mid Atlantic Regional Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine

Annual Scientific Meeting, November 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019  
Conference Proceedings

International Journal of Exercise Science, Volume 9, Issue 8



### The Impact of COVID-19 on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior in Children: A Pilot Study Lindsey E. White, Tiago V. Barreira, Michael L. Norris, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has interrupted the daily lives of many children. Transitioning to at-home learning as a result of stay-at-home orders and mandated school closures may reduce physical activity and increase sedentary behaviors. **PURPOSE:** To examine the impact of COVID-19 on physical activity (PA) and sedentary behavior (SB) in children (age < 18 years). **METHODS:** Parents of school-aged children were surveyed about their child's PA and SB prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was designed to gather demographic information, assess PA (days per week that children were physically active for at least 60 minutes) and SB (hours spent watching TV on weekdays and weekend days). Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to examine differences in PA and SB prior to and during mandated school closures. **RESULTS:** Participants ( $n = 42$ ) were mostly white (88%) and non-Hispanic or LatinX (95%). 57% of participants resided in Central New York and the youngest child in the household was  $7 \pm 4$  yrs. Children engaged in 60+ minutes of physical activity on more days per week during COVID-19 when compared to days prior (3.8 days vs. 5.1 days;  $Z = -3.241$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, children spent more hours per weekday viewing TV during the pandemic ( $Z = -2.233$ ,  $p = .026$ ) whereas no change was seen in hours spent viewing TV on a weekend day ( $Z = -.187$ ,  $p = .851$ ). **CONCLUSION:** Our results revealed that children are meeting PA recommendations on more days per week during the pandemic when compared to before. Despite increased PA, a significant increase in weekday TV time was also observed. These findings are likely a result of stay-at-home orders and mandated school closures consequently affording children more time to be physically active at home while also viewing more TV on weekdays. The positive health implications of PA are well understood and suggest that parents should aim to maintain (or increase) their child's current level of PA while also being vigilant about reducing screen time when engaging in (and potentially transitioning away from) remote learning.