



Lifestyle & Prevention

Physical activity and sedentary behaviour during lockdown

What is the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns?

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The current COVID-19 lockdowns cause both a decrease in physical activity (PA) and sedentary behavior (SB). This applies to both healthy individuals and several patient populations, including some which have been shown to benefit from PA, such as type 2 diabetes.

The largest changes in PA are seen in people with greater pre-lockdown PA levels. There is also a large decrease in the training volume and intensity of elite athletes. Considering the positive results of digitally-delivered PA during the first lockdown, this strategy should be applied widely in future similar situations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a massive global impact, causing over a million deaths and forcing a large part of the population to remain at home. This has the potential to significantly impact the PA and SB levels. Considering the widely known positive effects of PA on global health, the pandemic may very well have a post-lockdown effect on the health of people not diagnosed with COVID.

A total of 66 articles involving 86,981 subjects were included in the review. Study risk of bias was assessed using the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale. The chosen outcome measures were changes in physical activity and/ or sedentary behaviour reported using PA monitoring devices and/ or self-reported tools.

Considering the impact of COVID-19 on PA and SB levels, governmental authorities should aim to implement measures to allow for the safe practice of PA during future

lockdowns and pandemics. This in order to avoid the negative effects of increased SB on the physical and mental health of the general population, and especially of patients with conditions in which PA may have a therapeutic effect. The deconditioning effect on the general population and on athletes should also be considered when designing programmes of return to regular PA.

The full text version of this article is available online for free, you can read it [here!](#)

Expert opinion

This review highlights the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a massive effect not only in the health and participation of those directly affected by it, but also an indirect effect due to decreased PA levels. This may have a long-term impact in terms of the prevalence and severity of musculoskeletal and cardiovascular disease, with a corresponding burden on healthcare systems.

Therefore, as highlighted by the authors, it is crucial that governments take steps to implement conditions for safe PA in order to prevent these negative effects. At a smaller scale, each one of us should also aim to be agents of promotion of safe PA within our social circles. For further details about the findings of this review, the full text is free to access at BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine.

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