

The impact of sport activity shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic on children, adolescents, and young adults: was it worthwhile?

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We conducted a national retrospective survey of 1764 athletes aged ≤ 25 years to investigate the benefit–risk balance of sport closure during the COVID-19 pandemic peaks in Italy. Univariate and multivariable analyses were carried out to investigate the association between sport practice during the study period and (1) the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection in athletes and their families and (2) body mass index (BMI) change, and adherence to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for physical activity. The percentage of subjects with a positive SARS-CoV-2 test was similar in those participating and not taking part into sport activities (11% vs. 12%, respectively, $p = 0.31$). Restricting the analysis to subjects who practiced sports within an organized sport society/center, the risk of SARS-CoV-2 positivity was reduced for athletes who had never stopped their training (odds ratio (OR); 95% confidence intervals (CI): 0.62; 0.41–0.93). On the other side, responders who had stopped sport activity showed a 1% increase in BMI. Adherence to WHO guidelines for physical activity was significantly higher for athletes who had continued sport activities. In conclusion, sport closure and limitations had an important negative impact on the overall health of young athletes, being also not effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

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