

# Kids and the Coronavirus: Unintended Consequences Two Years Later



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The World Health Organization [declared](#) the Coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Two years later, we never could have imagined how long the "slow the spread" mitigation measures would last. Shut-downs and closures from COVID-19 mitigation measures are proving to have unintended, negative consequences in areas such as economics, social and

emotional well-being, and preventative health measures for chronic illness.

What many do not realize is that lack of physical activity was identified as a [pandemic](#) in 2012. Despite some valiant health promotion attempts, lack of physical activity is still a problem and one of the leading causes of overweight and obesity. So, we have been living in two pandemics, but only one has dominated our public health discussions.

As mitigation measures change and restrictions loosen, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be on its way just to being a “normal” part of life. However, our actions—or inaction—over the past two years have put us at [risk of worsening](#) the pandemic of too little exercise.

Lockdowns in schools and other places that provide healthy foods and opportunities for safe physical activity have impacted the trajectory of childhood obesity. [Early studies](#) have found that youth obesity prevalence has increased and pandemic measures likely led to [weight gain](#) among children and adolescents.

[Physical activity experts warned](#) of the potential negative effects of shutdown measures and urged all sectors (schools, healthcare, parks) to consider needs for physical activity. As we begin to learn about the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing an increase in [sedentary behavior](#), or lack of physical activity, compared to pre-pandemic levels. Early evidence suggests an [increase in the prevalence](#) of youth obesity during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, a jump beyond the normal progression that was occurring naturally.

Childhood obesity trends are concerning, as an overweight child at [age five](#) has a strong likelihood of staying overweight into adulthood. Additionally, we know that [half of all deaths](#) in the United States are linked to preventable causes; not enough physical activity is one behavior we can impact. As we

reflect on the past two years, we must act now to correct the unintended consequences of accelerating the pandemic of too little exercise and increasing weight of our children. Their health is our future.

*Stefanie M. Meyer, PhD, CSCS is the Director of Accreditation and Assistant Professor of Practice in the [Department of Public Health](#) at North Dakota State University and a faculty fellow with the [Challey Institute for Global Innovation and Growth](#).*