

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Need for Resuming Sports and Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents Following COVID-19 Infection

Calcaterra, G., Fanos, V., Cataldi, L., Cugusi, L., Crisafulli, A., & Bassareo, P. P. (2022). Need for resuming sports and physical activity for children and adolescents following COVID-19 infection. *Sport Sciences for Health*, 18, 1179-1185.

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THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lifestyles of many children. Children's sport and physical activity participation decreased during the pandemic due to activities being cancelled or postponed, or because of restrictions on the use of activity spaces (Dorsch et al., 2021; Neville et al., 2022). As public spaces have reopened, the risk for infection remains. COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe. The severity of infection affects recovery and when and how children can reengage in sports and physical activity.



Research Summary

A systematic search was conducted in several databases using the terms children, adolescents, parents, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, sport, physical activity, exercise, guidelines, and comorbidities. A total of 514 studies were identified through the databases and after screening, 24 studies were included in the review. An additional 11 studies were found by screening the references of the 24 articles. A grand total of 35 studies were synthesized in a narrative review.

Conclusion:

Resuming physical activity after a COVID-19 infection can be physiologically challenging to children's bodies due to the increased energy demand. It is recommended that children, especially those who experienced long-term complications caused by COVID-19, be screened prior to restarting physical activity. A physical exam is suggested for these athletes including additional evaluations such as blood testing and cardiac monitoring. Parents play a big role in ensuring their child is ready to return to sports and physical activity by ensuring the child visits a doctor before playing and that the child is vaccinated. It is also recommended that children gradually increase the frequency, intensity, and time of their physical activity to minimize injuries. For sports, children should be at 25-50% of their previous participation level and focus on skills. The gradual return to play (GRTP) protocol can be used to guide the athlete about what types of activities to do based on the FIIT (i.e., frequency, intensity, time, type) principle.

Key Takeaway:

Caution should be taken when children become infected with COVID-19. It is important to allow sufficient time for recovery and obtain medical clearance before children reengage in activities. Parents can guide children to ensure they are healthy before starting activities and monitor their health after infection.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Calcaterra, G., Fanos, V., Cataldi, L., Cugusi, L., Crisafulli, A., & Bassareo, P. P. (2022). Need for resuming sports and physical activity for children and adolescents following COVID-19 infection. *Sport Sciences for Health*, 18, 1179-1185.

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