



Youth Health Community

PRESS RELEASE

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 6.00 a.m. 18th NOVEMBER

The impact of COVID-19 measures

Give the lifestyle and well-being of our children the highest priority

The Youth Health Community (YHC) believes that every child has the right to grow up healthy and therefore urges governments, politicians and other stakeholders to give the highest priority to the impact of the COVID-19 measures on the lifestyle and well-being of our children and young people.

The call to action above will be communicated by YHC during the international [webinar 'The Impact of Corona Measures on the Lifestyle of Our Children'](#) on 18th November. And has been endorsed by the YHC, among them for example: Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Croatia, Lebanon, Romania and The Netherlands. Speakers Jacob Schouenborg from ISCA in Denmark, Grace O'Malley from EASO, Ireland and Silvia Bucur from the PRAIS Foundation in Romania at our webinar also supported that message.

Impact observed by professionals

"Since the corona crisis healthcare professionals have observed that it has become more difficult for everyone to live a healthy life. Both in terms of nutrition, exercise, sleep and mental health. For the most vulnerable, this is the most complicated. More than ever we need to unite and come up with solutions that contribute to the well-being of those people in general and children in particular. It would – among other things - help if the food environment accelerated to become healthier through, for example price measures, product improvement requirements and the banning of fast food", says Karen den Hertog (Amsterdam Healthy Weight Approach).

Taking appropriate action

"For months we have spoken about the negative impact and the restrictions. Now it is time that we start to emphasize what is possible and take appropriate action by implementing community solutions, as that is where our children live their lives. A healthy youth is a healthy future, our children need our unconditional support. I think this is the responsibility of society as a whole. That's why we really need to join forces to prevent our children from the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic," Marjon Bachra (Managing Director Youth Health Community and JOGG) stresses.

The importance of a healthy lifestyle

Marjon Bachra: "This crisis once again underlines how important a healthy lifestyle is for both the younger and older generations. In the Netherlands we conducted a review¹ this summer, the outcome of which was that the impact of the COVID-19 measures on children and youngsters is significant. The review showed that during the first lockdown the intake of unhealthy food increased, physical activity decreased and screen time increased. Studies from Italy² and Finland³, for example, show similar results."

Exploring alternatives and solutions

Action taken at community and policy level should be inspired by positive alternatives and in response to the negative consequences of the restrictions. For example, alternatives to restricted activities due to school and park closures and the cancellation of team sports should be affordable and easy to integrate into home and neighbourhood-based activities, such as walking a mile every day with your family. Another positive alternative would be providing families with tips and resources on how to overcome their challenges in meeting their daily health goals as a result of COVID-19.

More information? Read the full statement below.

Resources

1. Iresearch, 2020. Onderzoek impact coronamaatregelen op kinderen en jongeren: https://jongerenopgezondgewicht.nl/userfiles/Communicatie/200629%20Onderzoeksrapport%20impact%20lockdown%20op%20kinderen%20en%20jongeren_definitief.pdf
2. Liang, Z., Delvecchio, E., Buratta, L., Mazzeschi, C., 2020. "Ripple effect": Psychological responses and coping strategies of Italian children in different COVID-19 severity areas. *Revista de Psicología Clínica con Niños y*



Youth Health Community

Adolescentes, Vol. 7 n^o. 3- Septiembre 2020 - pp 49-58. doi: 10.21134/rpcna.2020.mon.2054. University of Perugia, Italy

3. National Sports Council, 2020. Impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on population's physical activity. Accessed 16 November 2020: <https://www.liikuntaneuvosto.fi/en/impacts-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic-on-populations-physical-activity/>

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About Youth Health Community

Every child has the right to grow up healthy. Our community brings together programmes from around the world that work to promote a healthy weight for our young people. The Youth Health Community is coordinated by the Dutch programme [JOGG](#).

STATEMENT

Youth Health Community statement on the impact of COVID-19 measures on the lifestyle and well-being of our children.

Call to action

The Youth Health Community believes that every child has the right to grow up healthy and therefore urges governments, politicians and other stakeholders to give the highest priority to the impact of the COVID-19 measures on the lifestyle and well-being of our children and young people.

For months we have spoken about the negative impact and the restrictions. Now it is time that we start to emphasize what is possible and take appropriate action by implementing community solutions, as that is where our children live their lives. A healthy youth is a healthy future, our children need our unconditional support.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all areas of society. Children and young people are among the groups that have been most hard hit by the COVID-19 measures. The coronavirus itself - so far - seems to have very limited health effects on children and young people, however, the impact of the COVID-19 measures on children and young people has been significant. Research shows that during the first lockdown the intake of unhealthy food increased, physical activity decreased and screen time increased. Children and young people experienced more stress and anxiety, mental health problems increased and their social lives were disrupted. As a result weight gain as well as growing inequality may be expected, especially among vulnerable children and young people.

Today many Youth Health Community members and other similar organisations around the world are facing similar complex challenges exacerbated by the coronavirus, including challenges related to physical and mental health and well-being. Depending on their duration, these unfortunate lockdown effects could have a lasting effect. Improving our children's health and lifestyle is a common international challenge which has become more urgent than ever in these times of COVID-19.

Alternatives and solutions

We need to join forces to prevent our children from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Action taken at community and policy level should be inspired by positive alternatives and in response to the negative consequences of the restrictions. For example, alternatives to restricted activities due to school and park closures and the cancellation of team sports should be affordable and easy to integrate into home and neighbourhood-based activities, such as walking a mile every day with your family. Another positive alternative would be providing families with tips and resources on how to overcome their challenges in meeting their daily health goals as a result of COVID-19.



Youth Health Community

References/Literature

- Adams, L.E., Caccavale, L.J., Smith, D., Bean, M.K., 2020. Food Insecurity, the Home Food Environment, and Parent Feeding Practices in the Era of COVID-19. *Obesity*.
- Pietrobelli, A., Pecoraro, L., Feruzzi, A., Heo, M., Failth, M., Zoller, T., Antoniazzi, F., Piacentini, G., 2020. Effects of COVID-19 Lockdown on Lifestyle Behaviors in Children with Obesity Living in Verona, Italy: A Longitudinal Study. *Obesity* 28(8); 1382-85.
- Dunton, F.D., Do.B., Wang, S.D., 2020. Early effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical activity and sedentary behavior in children living in the U.S. *BMC Public Health* 20:1351.
- Mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition of schoolchildren. UNICEF, 2020.
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