

# Physical Activity, Sedentary Behavior and Sleep Duration Among Albanian School-Aged Children During the COVID-19 Lockdown

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted children's routines, affecting their physical activity, sedentary behaviors, and sleep patterns.

**Objectives:** This study aimed to assess the impact of the pandemic on physical activity, sedentary time, and sleep duration among Albanian schoolchildren, with a focus on differences by weight status.

**Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted as part of the sixth round of the Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI). It utilized parent/caregiver-completed forms to assess children's behaviors, including physical activity, sedentary behavior, and sleep duration, during the school year and the

COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

**Results:** During the pandemic, sedentary behaviors such as screen time increased for 21.6% of children on weekdays and 21.3% on weekends, with no significant variation by BMI. Active play decreased in 22.2% of children on weekdays and 19.7% on weekends, again with no major differences across BMI categories. Sleep time increased for 10% of children on weekdays and 14% on weekends, except for children with obesity, where an 11% decrease in weekday sleep was observed. Additionally, the proportion of children increasing weekend sleep decreased as BMI rose. About half of the children maintained consistent sedentary leisure patterns, while the rest experienced either increases or decreases.

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**Conclusion:** The decline in physical activity, coupled with increased screen time during the pandemic, poses a heightened risk for overweight and obesity among Albanian children, potentially exacerbating existing weight issues.

**Keywords:** Physical Activity, Sedentary Behavior, Sleep, COVID-19, Child Health, Pandemics