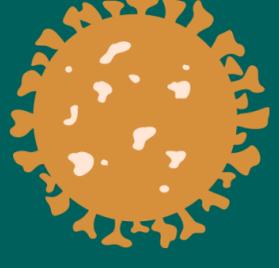


# The Impact of COVID-19 on Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour

Public health measures used to curb the spread of COVID-19 have impacted people's physical activity, health, and well-being.<sup>1</sup>



**A recent qualitative study\* interviewed 12 adults living in a Canadian city to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected physical activity, sedentary behaviour, and perceptions of health.**

Between June and August 2020, 12 adults living in north central Calgary were interviewed via Zoom or telephone, to explore how peoples' physical activity and perceptions of health had been affected by the pandemic.



Using thematic analysis, four key themes were identified:

## Disruption to Daily Routines



Participants had to establish 'new normals' and some experienced unanticipated benefits.

"I had to learn how to create my own structure and that was a little difficult. I tried to create normalcy by [going to the library].. and then the library shut down honestly, I don't know what I'd be doing if I wasn't working."

"Before the pandemic, my husband and I worked at the same office, but we had to commute.. We would rush to get the house ready.. with super stress.. we've gained this time from not commuting"

## Changes in Physical Activity



Participants had to find alternatives to their usual activities which often included new at-home and outdoor activities, as well as exploring more city parks.

"I do go to the gym just about every day, so my gym closed... I was looking at alternatives to keep active... Not having access to that definitely altered my workouts considerably"

"I found [yard work] was the most significant substitute for my usual gym... I found myself more sore.. [and] felt like I got a really good workout in from doing yard work, more than any of my gym workouts"

## Balancing Health



Many participants found it challenging to maintain all the aspects of their health and protect themselves from the virus. Some participants found that the pandemic was a good time for re-balancing.

"It's made me really rethink, why do we feel like we need to be busy all the time? It's made me rethink of how much I keep myself occupied even during non-quarantine times It's going to make me really value rest, and probably make myself less busy"

"Mental wellbeing I'm not quite where I want to be and it isn't without its roller coaster"

## Family Life



Parents discussed concerns and challenges, but also that they appreciated having more quality family time.

"The biggest challenge is still trying to be a parent while working... I'm working for hours, I have young kids that can't be left to their own devices all the time... I'm noticing a regression in my children since they've been taken out a daycare"

"It is difficult with the kids, but I wouldn't do the latter [go back to her pre-COVID-19 lifestyle]. The work-life balance was really hard. Now that we've settled into a newer normal, we've got our routines figured out"

Participants experienced different levels of disruption to their physical activity and daily lives from the COVID-19 public health measures. While some participants experienced challenges to modifying their routines, many adapted and described an enhanced sense of well-being and life balance during the pandemic.

**Strategies to support individuals with adapting to challenging and continuously changing circumstances is important for supporting physical activity and health during a pandemic.**

### \*For more information:

Petersen, JA, Naish, C, Ghoneim, D, Cabaj, JL, Doyle-Baker, PK, & McCormack, GR. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour: A Qualitative Study in a Canadian City. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2021; 18(9): 4441. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094441>

### References:

1) Chen, P, Mao, L, Nassis, GP, Harmer, P, Ainsworth, BE, & Li, F. Wuhan coronavirus (2019-nCoV): The need to maintain regular physical activity while taking precautions. *Journal of Sport and Health Science*. 2020; 9(2): 103-104.



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