

# **The Impact of COVID-19 Health and Safety Measures on the Physical and Mental Health of College Students**

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## **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in forced isolation around the globe as a critical public health measure to prevent the spread of the disease. College students might be at higher risk for mental health risks and problems due to the restrictions from the pandemic. The combination of stress, change in sleeping habits, and sedentary behavior may cause an increase in the already prevalent issue of obesity in this age group. Our first hypothesis was that students will rate having higher anxiety levels, stress levels, and higher depressive levels since the pandemic started in March 2020. Our second hypothesis was that physical health, as determined by eating habits, sleeping patterns, and physical activity, will have decreased after the pandemic started. The participants of this study were full-time residential college students at least 18 years old from primarily the New York 6 schools (n=552). The experiment asked participants to fill out a survey with 29 yes-no, multiple choice, or Likert scale questions on individual demographics, living arrangements, physical activity (frequency, intensity), sleep, diet, and mental health (stress, depression, and anxiety). The results showed that the pandemic had an overall negative effect on physical and mental health of college students. There were differences across age, race/ethnicity, and gender. This study provides more evidence that schools need to lay out a plan to restore the students' mental and physical health.