



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND DIET DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

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Background

The COVID-19 lockdown was enforced in March 2020. With the closure of many restaurants, businesses, gyms, schools, and other public amenities during the very beginning of quarantine, much of the American population was forced to change their routines and habits. Dealing with the stress and uncertainty of a pandemic can have effects on diet and physical activity.

Methodology

This study focuses on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of Utah residents aged 18 and up. 200 participants were enrolled. The study is completed over a 3-month period for each participant. Specifically for this project, data for 50 participants who started their 3-month period in April 2020 or May 2020 were analyzed. Each participant was interviewed through Zoom at 3 timepoints: month 0, month 1, and month 3. Participants are asked to elaborate on major changes in their life, including sleep, diet, and physical activity. After each recorded interview, the audio is transcribed to be coded for qualitative analysis. Afterwards, the participants are sent post-interview surveys twice a day for 7 days after their interview. The morning survey asks about their sleep. The evening survey discusses their stress and behavior throughout the day. Furthermore, the participants are contacted on 2 random days during the week to submit a food recall.

For this project, a quantitative analysis was done specifically on the physical activity and diet section of the daily stress and behavior survey. The change in average minutes spent per week on light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity was analyzed. Furthermore, the average daily servings of different food and drink categories (fruits & vegetables, sweets, alcohol, caffeinated drinks, etc.), as well as location of food preparation for breakfast, lunch, and dinner was evaluated.

Results

There was a decrease in light and moderate physical activity, with a significant proportion of the population also reporting an inconsistency in weekly minutes for all three types of physical activity. Serving sizes remained consistent across all food and drink categories over the 3-month period. Over 85% of people prepared food at home for the 3 main daily meals, but that percentage decreased over the 3 months.

Conclusion

Data collection for all 200 participants recently concluded in February 2021. Data analysis for the rest of the sample is currently in the works. This quantitative data can be connected to the qualitative data from the interviews in the future to gain a wider understanding of what possible factors participants mentioned in their interviews affected their sleep, diet, and physical activity.