

Children's body mass index rose during pandemic

October 14 2022



Children, particularly girls, experienced significant increases in body

mass index (BMI) during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics, held from Oct. 7 to 11 in Anaheim, California.

Rylie Mainville, a [medical student](#) at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, and colleagues assessed the trajectory of pediatric BMI during the pandemic versus prior to the beginning of the pandemic. Analysis included 238 patients (ages 4 to 17 years; majority Black and enrolled in Medicaid), seen for at least two well-check visits separated by one year.

The researchers found that BMI percentile increased significantly from the beginning of the COVID-19 shutdown to May 2021. The increase was more significant for girls. There were positive associations seen between increase in BMI percentile over the pandemic and an increase in family time and an increase in [screen time](#) over the last year.

"As BMI increase is multifactorial, future directions of this study could be aimed at investigating the root source of these changes and other unexpected implications," the authors write. "The results of this study could help families and [medical practitioners](#) combat this alarming increase in pediatric BMI, which will likely stay with us long after COVID-19 lifestyle modifications or no longer at play."

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Citation: Children's body mass index rose during pandemic (2022, October 14) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-10-children-body-mass-index-rose.html>

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