

Uptick in psychiatric emergency visits seen with school reopening following COVID-19 lockdowns

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School reopening following COVID-19 disruptions was associated with an increase in acute psychiatric emergencies, according to a study

[published](#) online Aug. 5 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Chiara Davico, M.D., from University of Turin in Italy, and colleagues assessed whether varying degrees of school interruption were associated with changes in emergency department psychiatric visits for [children](#) and adolescents before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis included 13,014 emergency department visits for psychiatric reasons to nine urban university hospitals in Italy (Jan. 1, 2018, to Dec. 31, 2021).

The researchers found that the number of emergency department psychiatric visits increased over time (incidence rate ratio [IRR], 1.19 for each year). Significant increases were seen for emergency department visits related to eating disorders (294.8 percent), suicide ideation (297.8 percent), and [suicide attempt](#) (249.1 percent).

An increase in [emergency department](#) visits was associated with school opening, but not social lockdown restriction (IRR, 1.29), which was significant for females and for suicide ideation and attempt. There was an association seen between [socioeconomic status](#) and an increase in psychiatric visits among males (IRR, 1.12).

"In this study, school opening was associated with an increased incidence of acute psychiatric emergencies among children and adolescents, suggesting that school can be a substantial source of stress with acute mental health implications," the authors write.

More information: Chiara Davico et al, COVID-19 Pandemic School Disruptions and Acute Mental Health in Children and Adolescents, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.25829](#)

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