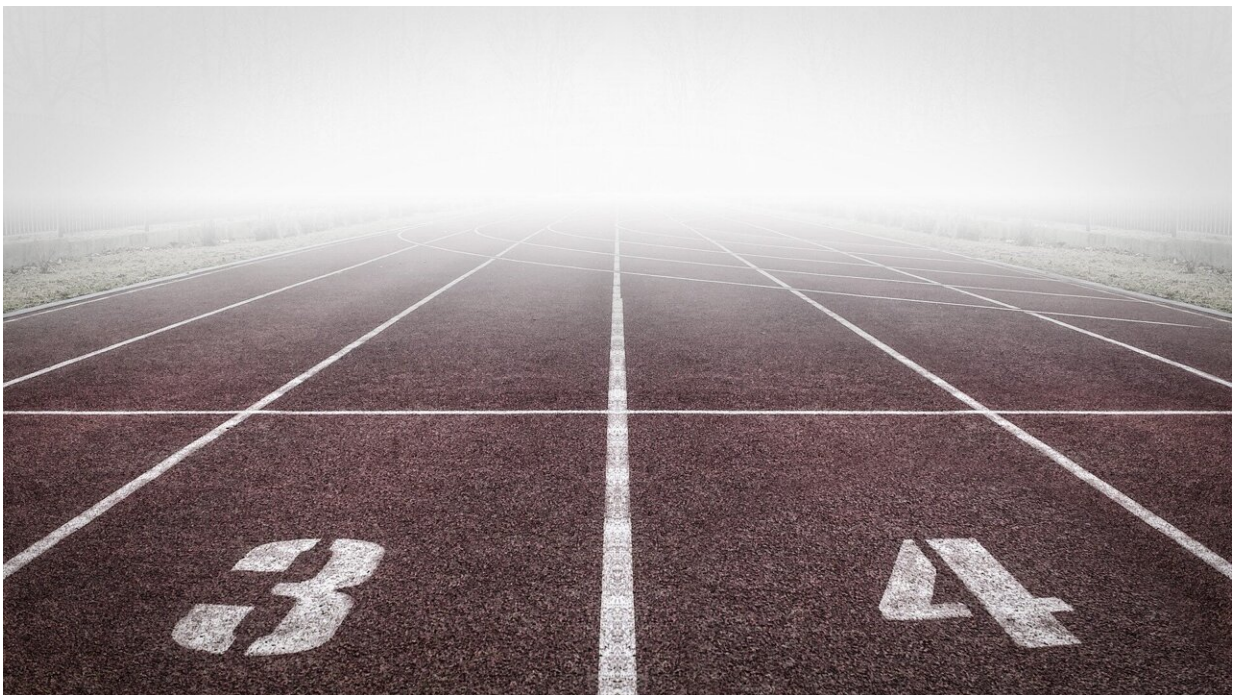


Mental and physical health of teen athletes impaired by COVID cancellations, improved significantly after sports resumed

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

High rates of depression and anxiety reported by adolescent athletes whose sports were canceled during the COVID-19 pandemic improved significantly a year later when they were able to resume playing sports, according to new research.

The author of an abstract, "The Influence of Return to Sport on Mental Health, Physical Activity and Quality of Life Among Adolescent Athletes During COVID-19," will present his findings during the AAP 2022 National Conference and Exhibition in Anaheim, CA.

"For decades, organized sport participation has been shown to have significant physical and [mental health benefits](#) for adolescents, but the COVID-19 pandemic really made this even more clear," said the author, Drew Watson, MD, MS, a team physician for the University of Wisconsin Athletics.

"The cancelation of [sports](#) in the early pandemic was accompanied by decreased physical activity and quality of life, as well as startlingly high levels of [anxiety](#) and depression. Although the return to sports has been associated with large improvements in physical activity levels, quality of life and mental health, we are still seeing higher levels of anxiety and depression than before COVID-19, suggesting that this will remain a vitally important priority for years to come."

A total of 17,421 teens nationwide completed surveys including demographic and [sport participation](#) information in May 2020 following COVID-19 related sport cancelations and after returning to sports in May 2021, according to the abstract.

When sports were canceled, adolescent athletes reported low levels of physical activity, poor quality of life and high rates of anxiety and depression. One year later, those athletes who were able to return to sports reported significant increases in [physical activity](#) and quality of life. The proportion of adolescents who reported moderate to severe anxiety or depression was reduced by about half.

Dr. Watson suggests that the opportunity to participate in organized sports can have dramatic benefits for adolescent [quality of life](#) and

mental health.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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