

COVID-19 has caused unprecedented mental health concerns in sport.

COVID-19 and its consequences have a negative impact on athlete mental health. Despite much of sport offerings returning to pre-pandemic levels, mental health concerns continue to amplify. Most notably the pandemic has increased anxiety, depression, and social isolation; decreased quality of life; and caused disruptions in sleep quality and quantity.

Parents can play an important part of early detection of mental health concerns among children and youth athletes. They are in an ideal position to detect any unusual changes in fundamental human functions. Paying attention to mood fluctuations and any changes in eating, sleeping, and hygiene habits is important, as they can be indicative of emerging mental health concerns.

HELPFUL DEFINITION:

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.

(World Health Organization, 2022)

Critical Questions:

To help assess whether your child/youth might have a mental health problem (from HealthyPlace, 2022), ask yourself:

Does my child/youth...

- Often seem sad, tired, restless, or out of sorts?
- Spend a lot of time alone?
- Have low self-esteem?
- Have trouble getting along with family, friends, and peers?
- Have frequent outbursts of shouting, complaining, or crying?
- Have trouble performing or behaving in school?
- Show sudden changes in eating patterns?
- Sleep too much or not enough?
- Have trouble paying attention or concentrating on tasks like homework?
- Seem to have lost interest in hobbies like music or sports?
- Show signs of using drugs and/or alcohol?
- Talk about death or suicide?

If you answered yes to 4 or more of these questions, and these behaviors last longer than 2 weeks, you should seek professional help for your child/youth.

More on Mental Health?

<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>



SCIENCE FACT:

Data from 13002 US adolescent athletes revealed that COVID-19 had a negative effect on their mental health and wellbeing. Various demographic factors (e.g., biological sex, grade level, sport(s) played, level of poverty) influenced mental health symptoms frequency, physical activity levels, and quality of life. (McGuine et al., 2021)