

Weight Bias During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented disruptions and changes to everyday life. As well as the obvious direct impacts such as health and finance consequences, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a multitude of indirect impacts such as changes in eating habits, physical activity, and sedentary behaviour.

This narrative review aims to assess the content of messaging and discussion of obesity in media and public health campaigns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures.

The review investigates 3 elements of weight bias and stigma in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Whether discussion of the "quarantine-15" in the media is warranted and/or may contribute to weight bias
2. Why stigma is relevant to public health messages that highlight obesity as a risk factor for heightened COVID-19 severity
3. How experiences of weight bias may affect well-being during the pandemic

There were mixed results regarding the influence of the pandemic upon individual's weight gain, however changes in health-related behaviours were evidenced. Media coverage and public health campaigns following the 'personal responsibility' discourse may be contributing to weight stigma. Individuals with a history of experiencing weight bias may be experiencing more psychological distress resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pearl, Rebecca L., and Erica M. Schulte. "Weight Bias during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Current Obesity Reports*, vol. 10, no. 2, 18 Mar. 2021, 10.1007/s13679-021-00432-2.