

College students must navigate a variety of stressors, ranging from academic demands and interpersonal conflict to career pressures and newfound autonomy. The chronic experience of this collection of stressors not only increases the likelihood of negative academic outcomes (i.e. burnout or dropout), but also promotes adverse consequences on physical and psychological health. The aims of this study were to determine whether exercise frequency predicts stress levels and to determine the effect of exercise frequency on the efficacy of stress interventions. Participants (n=25) were sorted by level of exercise. Baseline salivary cortisol and perceived stress (PSQ) were first assessed. Participants then were asked to participate in stress interventions unrelated to physical activity for one week. Afterwards participants self-reported these values, had their salivary cortisol measured, and took a post-survey for perceived stress. Pre and post salivary cortisol was measured at the same time of day. There was no statistically significant difference in cortisol or perceived stress between levels of exercise prior to the intervention. Additionally, no statistically significant difference was present in change of cortisol or perceived stress between exercise groups as a result of the intervention. In conclusion, we cannot identify conclusive effects of exercise level on physiological or psychological stress among college students. Additionally, we can not affirm that exercise level moderates the outcome of alternate stress interventions. Despite their insignificance, our results reflect a trend of improved intervention outcomes on physiological stress among college students engaging in greater amounts of exercise.