

Fact Sheet: Obesity-related healthcare costs at worksite

Healthier and happier employees are more productive in the workplace. In 2002, employers paid an average of \$18,618 per employee for all costs related to health and lost productivity. Obesity has increased at an alarming rate and has become a growing concern for employers considering health care cost and work productivity.

- ❖ Nationally, obesity costs US companies more than \$13 billion a year, including \$8 billion for health insurance, \$2.4 billion for sick leave, \$1.8 billion for life insurance, and another \$1 billion for disability insurance (*Thompson et al. 1998*).
- ❖ Employees at high risk of heart disease and stroke had higher health care expenditures than those who are not at risk: 228% higher expenses for heart diseases and 85% higher expenses for stroke (*Goetzel et al. 1998*)
- ❖ The cost of lost productivity related to overweight and obesity among US adults, ages 17~64, is \$3.9 billion (*Wolf and Colditz, 1998*). Cost due to workdays lost was \$39.3 million, physicians office visits \$62.7 million, restricted activity days \$239 million, bed-days \$89.5 million.

Wellness Program at the worksite and health care cost saving

Implementation of wellness program that promotes healthy lifestyle would benefit the employers by creating a healthier workplace and healthier employees.

- ❖ Obese employees have higher levels of absenteeism: 0.85 ~ 5.1 additional days compared to normal weight employees and weight control work site programs (review of 42 studies) produced average weight loss of 1 ~ 2 lbs/week during duration of program, leading to health cost savings (*Bachman KH, 2007*).
- ❖ Health promotion interventions showed a 26% drop in health care costs, a 27% drop in sick days, and a 32% reduction in workers' compensation cost (*Bachman KH, 2007*).
- ❖ Comprehensive worksite health programs focused on lifestyle behavior change have been shown to yield a \$3 to \$5 return on investment (ROI) for each dollar invested (*Goetzel et al. 1999*).
- ❖ Implementation of a self care program using a publication (*HealthyLife Self Care Guide*) was effective to reduce health care costs by 24.4%, saving \$39.65 / employee (ROI: 2.6) (*Powell et al, 1997*).

References

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