



## betterHEALTH clinic

3838 Midland Ave, Suite 103  
Toronto, ON, M1V 5K5  
Telephone: (416) 291-5120  
Fax: (416) 291-5756



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## February 2007: In this issue!

- Inactivity, Overweight, and Excess Medical Care Costs
- New Cancer Prevention Guidelines
- Office Hours

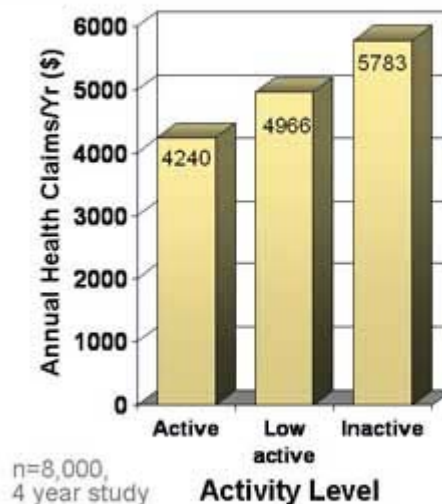
### ● Inactivity, Overweight, and Excess Medical Care Costs

## Activity Level and Health Claims

Health claims increased as activity levels decreased

When compared to active persons:

- Low-activity persons cost \$726/year more
- Inactive persons cost \$1,543/year more



Source: Preventing Chronic Disease. Oct. 2005.

How much extra is it costing your company for physical inactivity, overweight, and obesity among employees? A recent report in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) journal, called *Preventing Chronic Disease*, gives a revealing insight.

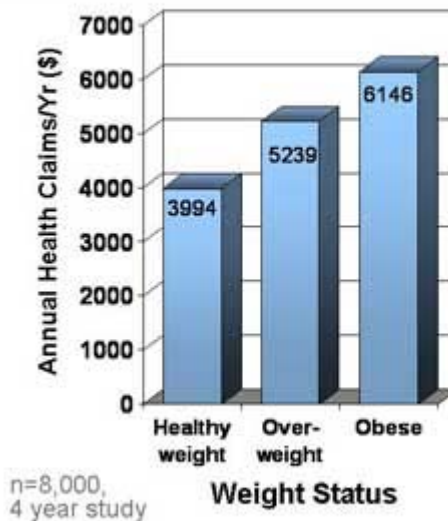
Researchers monitored health charges (claims) of about 8,000 health plan members, aged 40+, for a period of 4 years. Average charges were \$4,928 per member. They conducted a survey of these members to determine age and gender, presence of chronic disease, physical inactivity, height and weight (for BMI), smoking, and other lifestyle data. They then compared medical charges of inactive and overweight or obese individuals with health care charges for active, healthy weight persons of a similar age and gender. Here is what they found:

1. Charges increased with inactivity (an extra \$726 for low-activity persons, and an extra \$1,543 per year for inactive individuals compared to active members).\*
2. Charges increased with excess weight (an extra \$1,245 for overweight persons, and an extra \$2,152 per obese person per year compared to healthy weight members).
3. Charges were higher for women, increased with age, were higher for people with chronic disease (e.g., heart disease or diabetes), and were higher for former smokers than nonsmokers or current smokers (many ex-smokers quit smoking after they developed chronic health problems).
4. Their analysis indicates that 23.5% of all medical care charges (medical costs) were due to inactivity and excess body weight.

## Body Weight and Health Claims

Health claims increased as weight increased. Compared to healthy weight persons:

- Overweight persons cost \$1,245/year more
- Obese persons cost \$2,152/year more



Source: *Preventing Chronic Disease*. Oct. 2005.

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That means that nearly one-fourth of your health care expenses are due to inactivity and overweight and clearly illustrates the need for managing these modifiable health risks if you want health care costs to decrease.

Next, the researchers calculated the cost of inactivity and excess weight for our nation using national averages for the prevalence of inactivity and overweight. On a national basis, they estimate that 27% of all health care costs are due to inactivity and excess body weight (the prevalence of overweight and inactivity is higher in the nation than in the health plan studied).

The CDC article concluded by stating, "Our data emphasize the potential importance of primary prevention and effective management of overweight and physical inactivity."

If you are serious about lowering health care costs in your organization, you need to take an active role in promoting physical activity and healthy eating habits to help employees be fit and maintain a healthy weight.

\*Charges are standardized to 1997 US dollars.

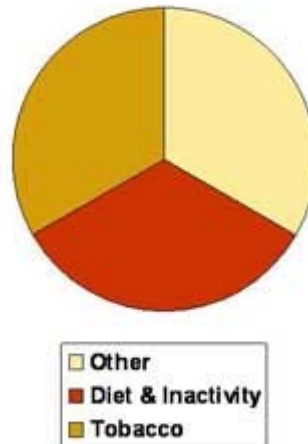
Reference: Anderson LH, Martinson BC, et al. Health Care Charges Associated with Physical Inactivity, Overweight, and Obesity. *Prev Chronic Dis*. October 2005.

## **New Cancer Prevention Guidelines**

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in America, taking about 500,000 lives each year. The potential for preventing cancer, however, is quite high. New guidelines presented by the American Cancer Society (ACS) indicate that about two-thirds of all cancers can be prevented by not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular exercise, avoiding or limiting alcohol intake, and choosing healthy foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and legumes and limiting red and processed meats.

### **500,000 Cancer Deaths, U.S./Yr**

- Tobacco is responsible for 1/3 of all cancers
- Poor diet and physical inactivity are responsible for another 1/3.
- Together they are responsible for 2/3 of all cancer deaths.



Source: CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians. Sept./Oct. 2006.

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Here are personal recommendations the ACS makes:

#### **1. Maintain a healthy weight throughout life**

- Balance calorie intake with physical activity.
- Avoid excessive weight gain throughout the life cycle.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight if currently overweight or obese.

#### **2. Adopt a physically active lifestyle.**

- Adults: engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity, above usual activity, on 5 or more days of the week. Forty-five to 60 minutes of intentional activity are preferable.
- Children and adolescents: engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity at least 5 days per week.

#### **3. Consume a healthy diet, with an emphasis on plant sources.**

- Choose foods and beverages in amounts that help achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat 5 or more servings of a variety of vegetables and fruits daily. (MyPyramid.gov recommends 7-9 servings daily for adults).
- Choose whole grains in preference to processed (refined) grains.
- Limit consumption of processed and red meats.

#### **4. If you drink alcoholic beverages, limit consumption.**

- Drink no more than one drink per day for women or two per day for men.
- The ACS also recognizes the influence of culture and environment on making healthy choices. They recommend that all public, private (including businesses), and community organizations work to create social and physical environments that support the adoption and maintenance of healthy nutrition and physical activity, including:
  - Increase access to healthy foods in schools, worksites, and communities.
  - Provide safe, enjoyable, and accessible environments for physical activity in schools and at the worksite, and for transportation and recreation in communities.

# What are your odds of getting cancer during your lifetime?

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Breast cancer	---	1 in 8
Prostate cancer	1 in 6	---
Colon and rectum cancer	1 in 17	1 in 18
Lung cancer	1 in 13	1 in 17
Bladder cancer	1 in 28	1 in 88
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	1 in 46	1 in 55
Melanoma of the skin	1 in 52	1 in 77
Leukemia	1 in 67	1 in 93
Uterine cancer	---	1 in 38
<b>Any cancer</b>	<b>1 in 2</b>	<b>1 in 3</b>

Source: American Cancer Society, 2006.

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**Action steps:** Considering that the odds of getting cancer during your lifetime are 1 in 2 for men and 1 in 3 for women, what you can do personally to reduce your risk of cancer? Then consider what social, worksite, and community environments you can help improve to encourage people to eat more healthfully and become more physically active. By everyone taking action and encouraging healthier living, you have it within your reach to prevent at least two-thirds of all cancers in your family, organization, or nation! Accept the challenge of living more healthfully in 2007!

Reference: Kushi LF, Byers T, et al. American Cancer Society Guidelines for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 56:254-281. September/October 2006.

## Office Hours.

### betterHEALTH Clinic

Monday	9:15 - 12:00/2:30 - 7:00
Wednesday	9:15 - 12:00/2:30 - 7:00
Friday	2:00 - 6:00
Saturday	9:00 - 12:00 (every other Saturday including Feb. 17th)

### Corporate Clinics

Tuesday	Transcontinental Media / Rogers Barrie
Thursday	Rogers Cable York Mills
Friday	Rogers Cable Richmond Hill