



## **F as in Fat 2009: Economic Costs of Obesity Fact Sheet**

- In 1998, the medical costs of obesity were estimated to be as high as \$78.5 million, with roughly half financed by Medicare and Medicaid. According to a new analysis, the annual medical burden of obesity has risen to almost 10 percent of all medical spending and could amount to almost \$147 billion per year in 2008.<sup>i</sup>
- Obesity-related annual costs for treating children more than tripled between 1979 and 1999.<sup>ii</sup>
- Projections for health care costs attributable to obesity and overweight are that they will more than double every decade. By 2030, according to one study, health care costs attributable to obesity and overweight could range from \$860 billion to \$956 billion, which would account for 15.8 to 17.6 percent of total health care costs, or one in every six dollars spent on health care.<sup>iii</sup>
- Obese people pay 36 percent more for health care and 77 percent more for medication when compared with normal-weight people.<sup>iv</sup>
- According to a professor of epidemiology and population health at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, to eat the recommended five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day would cost an individual three times more than a diet consisting of processed foods.<sup>v</sup>
- A 2007 study by researchers at the University of Washington found that unhealthy, high-calorie foods cost an average of \$1.76 per 1,000 calories, while low-calorie, nutritious foods cost \$18.16 per 1,000 calories. The study also found that unhealthy, high-calorie foods are not only the least expensive, but also most resistant to inflation.<sup>vi</sup>

### Workforce:

- Researchers found that obese workers had 183.63 lost workdays per 100 full-time employees, compared with normal-weight workers, who had 14.19 lost workdays per 100 full-time employees.<sup>vii</sup>
- As a person's BMI increases, so do the number of sick days, medical claims and health care costs.<sup>viii</sup>

- Several studies have shown obese workers have higher workers' compensation claims.<sup>ix x xi xii xiii xiv</sup>

- <sup>i</sup> Finkelstein, Eric. "Annual Medical Spending Attributable to Obesity: Payer- And Service-Specific Estimates." July 27, 2009.
- <sup>ii</sup> Finkelstein, E.A., C.J. Ruhm, and K.M. Kosa. "Economic Causes and Consequences of Obesity." *Annual Review of Public Health* 26 (2005):239-257.
- <sup>iii</sup> Wang, Y., M.A. Beydoun, L. Liang, B. Caballero, and S.K. Kumanyika. "Will All Americans Become Overweight or Obese? Estimating the Progression and Cost of the U.S. Obesity Epidemic." *Obesity* 16, no. 10 (2008): 2323-2330.
- <sup>iv</sup> Sturm, R. "The Effects of Obesity, Smoking, and Drinking on Medical Problems and Costs." *Health Affairs* 21, no. 2 (March/April 2002): 245-253.
- <sup>v</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. *Souring Economy, Rising Food Prices Could Exacerbate Obesity Epidemic, Experts Warn*. October 31, 2008. <http://www.rwjf.org/childhoodobesity/digest.jsp?id=8879> (accessed February 19, 2009).
- <sup>vi</sup> Monsivais, P., and A. Drewnowski. "The Rising Cost of Low Energy-Density Foods." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 107, no. 12 (2007): 2017-2076.
- <sup>vii</sup> Ostbye, T., J. M. Dement, and K. M. Krause. "Obesity and Workers' Compensation: Results from the Duke Health and Safety Surveillance System." *Archives of Internal Medicine* 167, no. 8 (2007): 766-773.
- <sup>viii</sup> The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the American Stroke Association, and the American Heart Association. *A Nation at Risk: Obesity in the United States, A Statistical Sourcebook*. Dallas, TX: American Heart Association, 2005. <http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1114880987205NationAtRisk.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2008).
- <sup>ix</sup> Ostbye, T., J. M. Dement, and K. M. Krause. "Obesity and Workers' Compensation: Results from the Duke Health and Safety Surveillance System." *Archives of Internal Medicine* 167, no. 8 (2007): 766-773.
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- <sup>xi</sup> Aldana, S. G. and N. P. Pronk. "Health Promotion Programs, Modifiable Health Risks, and Employee Absenteeism." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental* 43, no. 1 (2001): 36-46.
- <sup>xii</sup> Gordian Health Solutions. *Managing the Obesity Problem: A Case Study with Measurable Results*. Nashville, TN: Gordian Health Solutions, 2007.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Wang, F., T. McDonald, L. J. Champagne, and D. W. Edington. "Relationship of Body Mass Index and Physical Activity to Health Care Costs among Employees." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 46, no. 5 (2004): 428-436.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Burton, W. N., C. Y. Chen, A. B. Schultz, and D. W. Edington. "The Economic Costs Associated with Body Mass Index in a Workplace." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 40, no. 9 (1998): 786-792.