

The Economic and Health Impacts of Obesity Fact Sheet

Key Facts

- Two out of three American adults are overweight or obese (33% and 34%, respectively).¹
 - The percentage of U.S. adults classified as obese has more than doubled between 1980 and 2005, from 15% to 35%.¹
 - The prevalence of extremely obese (BMI ≥ 40) increased from 1.3% in 1980 to 6.2% in 2005.¹
 - The 2005-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey reported that more Americans qualified as obese rather than overweight for the first time in history.¹
- Among children, almost one out of three (32%) is overweight or obese (15.6% and 16.3%, respectively).²
 - Between 1980 and 2006, the prevalence of obesity among children has doubled in some age groups and tripled in others. Obesity increased among:^{1, 2}
 - 2–5-year-olds from 5.0% to 12.4%;
 - 6–11-year-olds from 6.5% to 17.0%; and
 - 12–19-year-olds from 5.0% to 17.6%.
- One-third (33% or 1.3 billion) of the world's adult population was overweight or obese in 2005; this is projected to grow to nearly 3.3 billion by 2030.³
- Projecting current trends, up to 86% of Americans will be overweight or obese by 2030.⁴
- The use of bariatric surgery is growing sharply in the U.S., from 16,000 procedures in 1992, to 171,000 in 2005, to over 220,000 bariatric surgeries in 2008, with prices averaging \$17,000-\$26,000 per surgery.^{5, 6}
- Only 50% of U.S. adults engaged in the recommended amount of physical activity; 24% of adults engaged in NO leisure-time physical activity in 2007.⁷
- Fewer than 10% of Americans eat the daily recommended amount of fruit and vegetables.⁸

Health Risks

- Weight gain is associated with an elevated risk for many conditions, including:
 - Coronary Heart Disease
 - Stroke
 - Type 2 Diabetes
 - Hypertension
 - Some Cancers
 - Sleep Apnea
 - Osteoarthritis
 - Respiratory Problems
 - Depression
 - Liver and gallbladder disease

- The estimate for deaths due to obesity ranges from 112,000 to 414,000 per year.⁹
- The prevalence of 11 chronic conditions associated with overweight and obesity grew 180% between 1997 and 2005.¹⁰
 - A weight gain of 11-18 pounds doubles your risk for Type 2 Diabetes.¹¹
 - For every two-pound increase in weight, the risk of developing arthritis is increased by 9%-13%.¹²
- Obese individuals have a 50-100% increased risk of premature death from all causes, compared to individuals at a healthy weight.¹²
- Obesity is a greater trigger for health problems and increased health spending than smoking or drinking. Individuals who are obese have 30% to 50% more chronic medical problems than those who smoke or drink heavily.¹³
- The effects of obesity are similar to 20 years of aging.¹³
- Each year, more American children are killed by obesity than gun violence.¹⁴
- Children who develop type 2 diabetes at a young age lose 20-28 “life years,” and 28-35 “quality-adjusted life years.”¹⁵
- Overweight teenagers have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults; this likelihood increases to 80% if at least one parent is overweight.¹²

Economic Costs

- The annual medical costs of obesity have doubled in the past decade and reached \$147 billion in 2008.¹⁶
 - Obesity now accounts for almost 10% of all medical spending, up from 6.5% in 1998.¹⁶
 - If projections hold, 15-17% of healthcare spending in the U.S. would be obesity-related in 2030.¹⁷
- Obesity costs private employers \$45 billion annually in medical costs and lost productivity.¹⁸
- Some 8% of private employer medical claims are due to overweight and obesity.¹⁹
- Obesity drives 27% of the increase in inflation-adjusted health expenditures among working-age adults.¹⁰
- Morbidly obese people incur 81% higher health care costs than those with normal weight; 65% more than overweight adults; and 47% more than obese adults.²⁰
- Obese workers' compensation claims are 2.8 times more expensive than nonobese claims at the 12-month maturity, 4.5 times more expensive after three years and 5.3 times more expensive after five years.²¹
- Obesity-related disabilities cost employers an average of \$8,720 per claimant per year for wage indemnity.²²
- The average American is 23 pounds overweight. The cost of the extra food needed to maintain the nation's 4.6 billion pounds of excess body weight is greater than \$50B per year.²³

Employer Strategies

- 52% of large employers offered weight management programs in 2009.²⁴
 - To learn how to start a weight management program, please see [Weigh Your Options: Guide to Starting a Weight-Management Program in Your Company](#), a joint publication of the Business Group and Weight Watchers International.
- 60% of 58 large employers surveyed offered employees an onsite fitness center in 2009.²⁵
 - 55% of 49 large employers offer reimbursements for off-site fitness centers/health club memberships.²⁶
- 69% of 49 large employers have conducted assessments on healthy food choices for their dining facility, catering or vending machines.²⁷
 - To learn more, or to access dining assessment tools, please see the National Business Group on Health toolkit [Promoting Healthy Weight Through Healthy Dining at Work](#).
- 54% of 24 large employers surveyed cover services provided by registered dietitians in their health plan (survey in process; November 2009).

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