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November 1, 2011

Obesity and Lost Productivity



Two separate studies report dramatic costs associated with obesity in the work force. You can't pick up a newspaper or magazine (or download a newscast) without hearing something about the problem of obesity in the United States today. These two studies just amplify the concern. One was "simply" a **Gallup** poll of about 110,000 workers who responded to personal questions about their height, weight and chronic health conditions. The results, only 14% of the respondents were in the normal range for weight and had zero chronic health conditions! The rest, or 86%, were overweight and had one or more chronic conditions. For those with normal weight, the average number of sick days taken per year was 4. For those in that "all other" category (overweight and with conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease), the average was up to a startling 42 days/year (with the low of 1 day/month for those with only 1-2 chronic conditions). The estimated cost for those lost work days? \$81billion.

The second study (one actually done in 2007) reported by the **Milken Institute**, included a greater number of chronic condition types, and reported that the actual cost to employers for lost time is more like \$1.1trillion PLUS another \$277billion to treat the illnesses themselves. (2007 dollars?)

There is so much at stake for you and your employees. The problem of obesity won't disappear because people take more personal responsibility independently. Nor will it improve dramatically due to government intervention and programs. At the core of your on-site clinic there has to be a core commitment to helping your employees lose weight. You know that, we know that. These data just reinforce how important it is economically, now think about how important it is to quality of life, etc.

Written by: OnSite Clinics Editor
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