


HealthLeaders^{Media} FACT FILE

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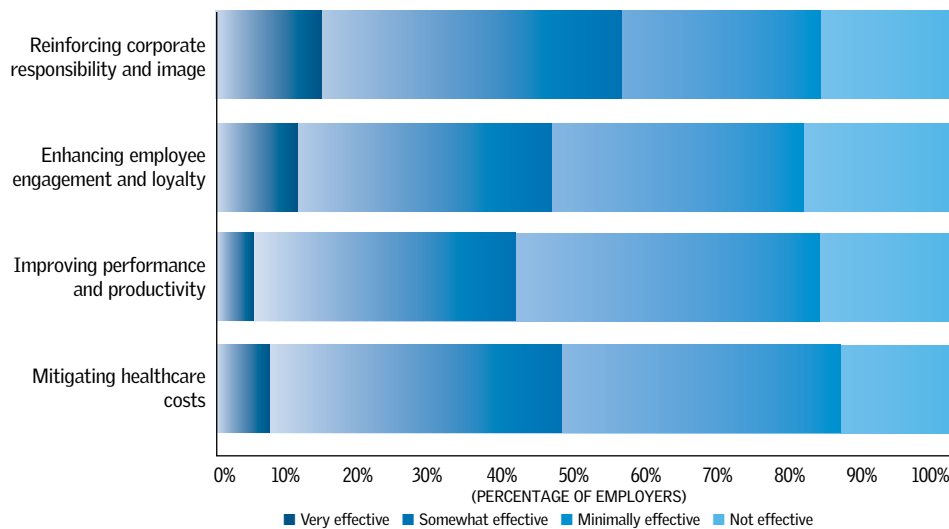
Wellness Programs

Chronic diseases contribute to rising healthcare costs, falling productivity, and work force shortages amid an aging population. Yet many of the health risks associated with chronic disease—from obesity to smoking to a lack of exercise—are at least partially preventable. With the importance of controlling health risks becoming ever more evident, effective wellness programs are growing more crucial for healthcare organizations and employers alike. Although the return

on investment varies from organization to organization, wellness initiatives have demonstrated consistently favorable returns, including a reduction in sick leave absenteeism, a reduction in workers' compensation and disability management claims costs, and a median return on investment of roughly 3-to-1, meaning that employers save approximately \$3 for every \$1 spent on wellness programs, according to research from Thomson Reuters. 

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

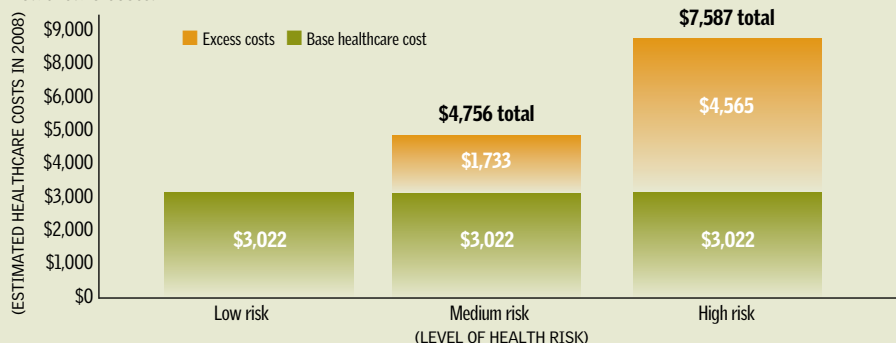
A PricewaterhouseCoopers Health Research Institute survey found that employers believe their wellness programs are most effective at reinforcing corporate responsibility and image.



SOURCE: PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Behind the Numbers: Medical Cost Trends for 2009*

WHAT'S THE COST?

People with multiple health risk factors like obesity or hypertension are more likely to have higher healthcare costs.



SOURCE: PricewaterhouseCoopers and the World Economic Forum, *Working Towards Wellness: The Business Rationale*

Wellness That Works

How can organizations design wellness programs that really work? Here are some tips for creating effective wellness initiatives.

- Perform a needs assessment
- Emphasize high participation rates
- Craft tailored behavior change messages for participants
- Stress that employees must be active participants in their healthcare
- Ensure that programs address multiple risk factors
- Provide easy access to programs and effective follow-up
- Provide social support
- Provide incentives for participation
- Maintain a healthy company culture and executive support for programs
- Ensure sufficient duration of program—at least three years

Parts of the Program

Wellness initiatives should include components designed to ensure success at both the individual and organizational level.

Individual level

- Craft health risk assessments to determine priorities and areas of concern
- Offer individual health coaching
- Supplement coaching efforts with targeted educational materials

Organizational level

- Offer healthy food options on site—in the cafeteria and vending machines
- Maintain leadership support of all programs
- Create a health-and-fitness-friendly environment

SOURCE: Thomson Reuters

Upcoming Topic:

- » Patient Satisfaction

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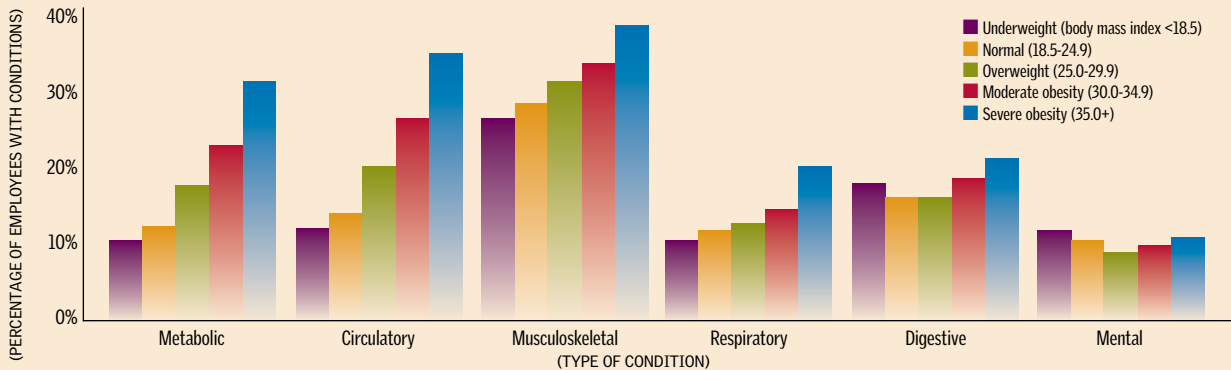
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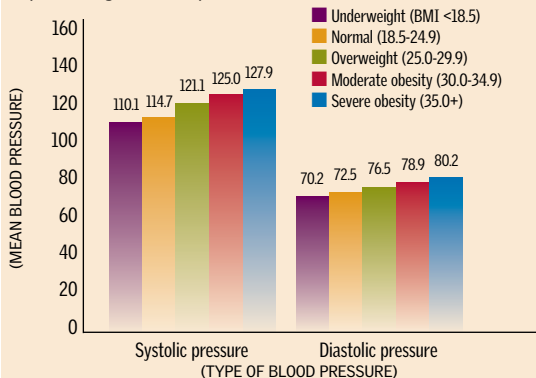
THE PRICE OF OBESITY

Obesity is associated with multiple health problems. In one recent study, the frequency of metabolic and circulatory conditions, for example, was three times higher in employees with severe obesity compared to normal-weight employees.



WATCH THAT PRESSURE

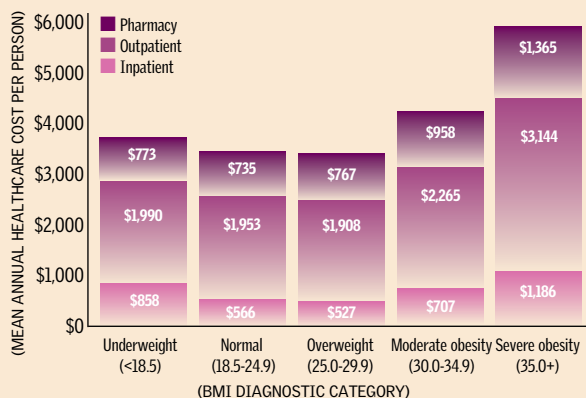
Blood pressure rises with increased body weight. As part of the same study, workers who reported higher body weights also reported higher blood pressures.



SOURCE: Thomson Reuters MarketScan Health Risk Assessment Database, 2007

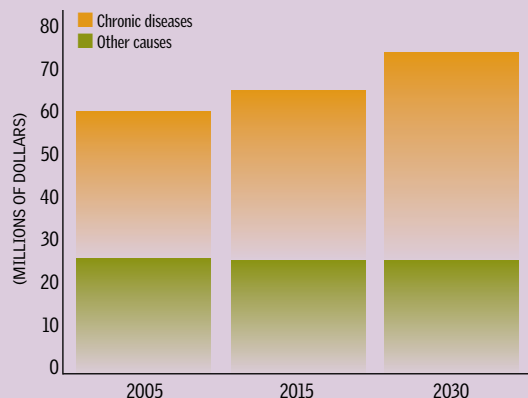
MORE WEIGHT, MORE COSTS

Healthcare costs increase with body weight. Given its multiple adverse health consequences, obesity has been implicated as a contributing factor in a sizable proportion of the total healthcare costs in the United States.



CHRONIC DISEASE DEATHS

Wellness programs will become increasingly important as chronic diseases take a larger toll on the international population. World Health Organization data show that deaths due to chronic diseases are expected to rise by 23% over the next 20 to 25 years, while deaths due to other causes are projected to remain roughly stable.



SOURCE: PricewaterhouseCoopers and the World Economic Forum, *Working Towards Wellness: The Business Rationale*

A GLOBAL ISSUE

The emphasis on wellness initiatives will likely touch all corners of the world in coming decades. Chronic-disease-related deaths currently represent nearly 80% of deaths in high-income developed nations, according to the World Health Organization, but such deaths are projected to eventually reach similar levels in all but the lowest-income regions. Developing nations will thus face the same problems associated with chronic disease that higher-income countries already face.

