

# Obese workers' health care costs top those of smokers

April 13 2012

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Smokers cost employers an additional \$1,275 a year, while obese workers cost \$1,850 more, study says.

(HealthDay) -- Obese workers have even higher health costs than smokers, a new study finds.

Researchers examined data from more than 30,000 Mayo Clinic employees and retirees who had continuous health insurance from 2001 to 2007.

The analysis revealed that both obesity and smoking were associated with higher [health care costs](#). Average yearly [health costs](#) were \$1,275 more for smokers than [nonsmokers](#) and \$1,850 more for obese people than those with normal weight.

Health care costs for morbidly obese people were up to \$5,500 more a

year than for normal weight people.

The additional health care costs associated with obesity appeared to be lower after the researchers adjusted for other accompanying health problems, but "this may lead to underestimation of the true incremental costs, since obesity is a risk factor for developing chronic conditions," wrote James Moriarty and colleagues at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Employers are looking at ways to reduce health care costs -- such as quit-smoking and fitness programs -- and this study showed that both obesity and smoking led to persistently higher health care costs during the seven years examined by the researchers, the study authors said.

The study was published in the March issue of the [Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine](#).

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases outlines the [health risks of being overweight](#).

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Citation: Obese workers' health care costs top those of smokers (2012, April 13) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04-obese-workers-health-smokers.html>

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