

## Report: Global obesity costs hits \$2 trillion

November 20 2014, by Danica Kirka

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This is a Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2007 file photo of an overweight person eating in London. A new report by the McKinsey Global Institute released Thursday Nov. 20, 2014 that the global cost of obesity has risen to \$2 trillion annually—nearly as much as smoking or the combined impact of armed violence, war and terrorism. The report released Thursday focused on the economics of obesity, putting it among the top three social programs generated by human beings. It puts its impact at 2.8 percent of global gross domestic product. (AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, File)

The global cost of obesity has risen to \$2 trillion annually—nearly as much as smoking or the combined impact of armed violence, war and terrorism, according to a new report released Thursday.

The McKinsey Global Institute consulting firm's report focused on the economics of obesity, putting it among the top three social programs generated by human beings. It puts its impact at 2.8 percent of global gross domestic product.

"Obesity isn't just a health issue," one of the report's authors, Richard Dobbs, said in a podcast. "But it's a major economic and business challenge."

The company says 2.1 billion people—about 30 percent of the global population—are overweight or obese and that about 15 percent of health care costs in developed economies are driven by it.

In emerging markets, as countries get richer, the rate of obesity rises to the same level as that found in more developed countries. The report offers the stark prediction that nearly half the world's adult population will be overweight or obese by 2030 should present trends continue.

"We are on an unfortunate trajectory," Dobbs told The Associated Press. "We have to act."

The report's authors argue that efforts to deal with obesity have been piecemeal until now, and that a systemic response is needed.

McKinsey says there's no single or simple solution to the problem, but global disagreement on how to move forward is hurting progress. The analysis is meant to offer a starting point on the elements of a possible strategy.

"We see our work on a potential program to address obesity as the equivalent of the maps used by 16th-century navigators," McKinsey said in its report. "Some islands were missing and some continents misshapen in these maps, but they were still helpful to the sailors of that era."

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