

Obesity more expensive to treat than smoking

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(HealthDay)—Annual health care expenses are substantially higher for smokers and the obese, compared with nonsmokers and people of healthy weight, according to a report published online Dec. 24 in *Public Health*. In fact, obesity is actually more expensive to treat than smoking on an annual basis, the report author concludes.

To understand the financial impact of [obesity](#) and smoking, Ruopeng An, Ph.D., assistant professor of kinesiology and [community health](#) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, analyzed data from 125,955 participants in the 1996 to 2010 National Health Interview Surveys. The participants also took part in a subsequent survey on health-related expenses. The study focused solely on health-care expenditures: hospital inpatient and outpatient care, emergency department treatment, physicians' office visits, out-of-pocket expenses, and prescription drug costs.

Between 1998 and 2011, estimated [health-care expenses](#) associated with obesity and smoking increased by 25 and 30 percent, respectively, according to An's findings. The rising cost of prescription drugs appeared to fuel the increase in health-care expenses related to obesity and smoking, An found. Pharmaceutical expenses associated with obesity and smoking were 62 and 70 percent higher, respectively, in 2011 than in 1998. Obese people run up an average \$1,360 in additional health-care expenses each year compared with the non-obese. The individual obese patient is responsible for \$143 in extra out-of-pocket expenses. By comparison, smokers require an average \$1,046 in additional health-care expenses compared with nonsmokers, and pay an extra \$70 annually in out-of-pocket expenses.

An told *HealthDay* that his results show [obesity prevention](#) and anti-smoking campaigns could go a long way toward reigning in rising [medical expenses](#). "In order to contain increasing health-care costs, we need to think more about how to prevent obesity rather than treating obesity, because treatment of obesity is much more expensive than prevention," he said.

More information: [Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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