

Considerable absenteeism costs for chronic disease, risk factors

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(HealthDay)—Considerable costs are associated with absenteeism

related to chronic diseases and health risk factors, according to a study published in the Oct. 6 issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Preventing Chronic Disease*.

Garrett R. Beeler Asay, Ph.D., from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues examined the correlation between employee absenteeism and five conditions using data from the MarketScan Health Risk Assessment and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS). Excess absenteeism was estimated for those who reported having a risk factor (smoking, physical inactivity, and obesity) or a [chronic condition](#) (hypertension and diabetes).

The researchers found that depending on the risk factor or chronic disease, absenteeism estimates varied from one to two days per individual per year. Disease- and risk-factor-specific estimates were similar in MEPS and MarketScan, except for the [physical inactivity](#) and obesity estimates. There was an increase in absenteeism with the number of risks factors or diseases reported. Each risk factor or disease correlated with annual absenteeism costs in excess of \$2 billion nationally. Per employee per year, the costs of [absenteeism](#) varied from \$16 to \$81 for small employers and from \$17 to \$286 for large employers.

"Absenteeism costs associated with [chronic diseases](#) and health risk factors can be substantial," the authors write. "Employers may incur these costs through lower productivity, and employees could incur costs through lower wages."

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