

The Enormous Cost of Not Living A Healthy Lifestyle

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Countless studies have proven that if we live a healthy lifestyle, eating nutritious, all-natural food, we in turn will be healthy by managing or preventing diseases, maintaining a proper body weight and having quality energy, and the list goes on and on.

C. Everette Koop, the former U.S. Surgeon General, recently said, “Obesity, the chemicals and additives in our food, and smoking are the leading causes of disease and health care problems in the United States. Following the Center for Disease Control’s definition of a healthy lifestyle would virtually eliminate these problems.”

In August 2009, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) issued four simple rules that define a healthy lifestyle. By following the rules, the CDC explained, people would prevent, eliminate or mitigate 80 percent of the major diseases in the United States. The four guidelines are:

1. Don’t smoke
2. Eat an all-natural diet with lots of fruits and vegetables
3. Keep your BMI below 30
4. Exercise 3-1/2 hours per week

Not following these rules can lead to several diseases, including obesity, heart disease, diabetes and cancer. These diseases are causing a major strain on our healthcare system as a whole, and following the guidelines would virtually end the healthcare debate in the United States.

The George Washington University School of Public Health and The United States Health Services’ Department of Health Policy recently released a report that for the first time showed the startling high individual costs of not living a healthy lifestyle. The report, “A Heavy Burden,” was written by Avi Dor, Professor and Director of Health Economics Program at The George Washington University. Dor and his colleagues used a series of measures including indirect costs, lost productivity, medical expenditures and shorter lifespan costs to show the costs of not living a healthy lifestyle.

The report found that men and women not leading a healthy lifestyle spend \$2,646 and \$4,879, respectively, more per year than those that follow the CDC guidelines outline above. When adding the value of lost life, those figures rise to \$8,365 for women and \$6,518 for men not living a healthy lifestyle. The report also showed not only additional medical costs, but also higher absenteeism and lost wages due to disabilities.

Another study, conducted on 4,143 Shell Oil Company employees over ten years, further explored the employee absenteeism associated with an unhealthy lifestyle. The study found that those employees with a BMI over 30 and not following a healthy lifestyle missed an extra 4.7 days of work per year compared to those employees who were living a healthy lifestyle.

Similar results were also found in a recent study cited on www.MohrResults.com. The study, which targeted more than 11,000 employees at 49 different companies, showed that those not

following the CDC guidelines missed, on average, 66 percent more time (5.8 days) than the control group.

Furthermore, a new report published online in Health Affairs outlines the financial cost of not following the CDC guidelines and having a BMI over 30. The portion of the report that focused on prescription drugs found that those not following the CDC guidelines spend 80 percent, or \$1,400, more per year than those following the guidelines.

When added up, the additional costs for those not living a healthy lifestyle compared to those who do live a healthy lifestyle as defined by the CDC guidelines and eat mainly an all-natural diet over 20 years are astronomical.

For people not living a healthy lifestyle (and/or a BMI over 30) and not eating predominately all-natural foods	
1. Additional medical costs over 20 years (doctor visits and hospitalizations):	\$97,580 for women \$52,920 for men \$75,250 average
2. Additional medical costs when adding the value of lost life (shorter lifespan):	\$69,720 for women \$77,440 for men \$73,580 average
3. Additional cost of missed work over 20 years at \$120/day:	\$13,920
4. Additional cost of prescription drugs over 20 years:	\$28,000
Total average additional costs over 20 years per individual:	\$ 190,750

This is an exorbitant figure in additional costs for those individuals not living a healthy lifestyle. Or, looking at it another way: this is a huge savings for those who are living a healthy lifestyle. Obviously these results are based on several large studies with tens of thousands of individuals and scientific averages are used, so results will vary with each individual. But if it is even close, the costs to you and our healthcare system are staggering.

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