



Physical Inactivity Cost Calculator

factsheet

what

The *Physical Inactivity Cost Calculator* is a free, easy-to-use Web-based tool that uses a scientifically based formula to estimate the financial costs of physical inactivity among citizens in any state, community or organization in the U.S. The Calculator can be accessed by visiting <http://www.ecu.edu/picostcalc/>.

why

Physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyles are contributing to a national health crisis of epidemic proportions. Aside from the personal cost of individual health problems, a physically inactive population is a financial burden to taxpayers and society as a whole, impacting business and local and state government throughout the U.S. The *Physical Inactivity Cost Calculator* provides policymakers, government leaders and businesses a way to estimate the financial costs of a physically inactive population and shows decision makers how to reallocate existing financial resources to support physical activity.

how

Simple demographic data is entered into the calculator by an individual. Using a scientifically based formula, the calculator computes the estimated cost of physical inactivity based on the aggregate of medical care, workers' compensation and loss of productivity costs.

who

The *Physical Inactivity Cost Calculator* was developed with funding from Fifty Plus Lifelong Fitness. The National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity also sponsors the project, which is supported by additional partner organizations.

keyISSUES:

- Two-thirds of Americans are officially overweight, up from half just 20 years ago¹
- In 2000, the health costs of overweight and obesity were estimated at \$117 billion²
- Physical inactivity contributes to numerous physical and mental health problems and is responsible for an estimated 200,000 deaths per year.³
- A national study of 448 metropolitan counties found that people living in sprawling, low-density counties walk less, weigh more and are more likely to be obese or have hypertension than people living in more compact counties.⁴

keyRECOMMENDATIONS:

- Plan and design communities that foster walking and biking
- Create "complete streets" that allow for physical activity and have a network of sidewalks, paths and trails
- Ensure access for all to well-maintained parks, trails and recreational facilities
- Support healthy school environments, including neighborhood schools rather than regional schools, mandatory PE classes and safe routes to school programs

For Businesses:

- Encourage health care and/or insurance companies to offer physical activity programs or benefits
- Provide opportunities for walking breaks, incentives for alternative transportation options and mortgage programs in activity-friendly communities
- Support workplace physical activity benefits, such as gym memberships
- Consider locating in a community where walking is an option rather than in an office park

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Defining Overweight and Obesity." 20 May 2004. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/defining.htm>.

² Wolf, AM, Manson JE, Colditz GA. The Economic Impact of Overweight, Obesity and Weight Loss. In: Eckel R, ed. *Obesity Mechanisms and Clinical Management*. Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins; 2002.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1996). *Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

⁴ Ewing, R., Schmid, T., Killingsworth, R., et al. (2003). Relationship between urban sprawl and physical activity, obesity, and morbidity. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 18, 47-57.