

Unhealthy Workers Costs Employers \$153B a Year

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October 17, 2011 (PLANSPONSOR.com) - Full-time workers in the U.S. who are overweight or obese and have other chronic health conditions miss an estimated 450 million additional days of work each year compared with healthy workers, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.

This results is an estimated cost of more than \$153 billion in lost productivity annually.

According to a press release, full-time workers who are of normal weight and do not suffer from chronic health conditions make up 13.9% of the U.S. workforce and average .34 unhealthy days each month – or about four days per year. The average number of unhealthy days per month is slightly higher at .36 among those who are overweight or obese and do not have additional chronic health conditions.

Unhealthy days per month increase further to 1.08 for workers who are overweight or obese and have one to two additional chronic health conditions. Workers who are of an above-normal weight and have three or more chronic health conditions report a significantly higher average of 3.51 unhealthy days per month – that is about 42 days per year.

The \$153 billion in lost productivity estimated in the analysis would increase if it included presenteeism, which is when employees go to work but are less productive in their jobs because of poor health or wellbeing. Including part-time employees would also add to the estimate of costs in lost productivity.

The announcement said other research that has examined a broader array of factors using a somewhat different list of chronic conditions places the economic effect of lost productivity at \$1.1 trillion per year.

The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index data collected between January 2 and October 2, 2011. Gallup surveyed 109,875 full-time employees – those who work at least 30 hours per week – during this time period.

More information is available at <http://www.well-beingindex.com/>.