

## The High Cost of Inactivity

Defining inactivity as the absence of leisure time physical activity, a study from the Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, Mass., determined that inactivity costs the U.S. \$24 billion.

In addition to hypertension, other chronic conditions related to inactivity include coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, depression, osteoporotic hip fractures and obesity. Obesity is associated with gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, cancer of the breast, colon and endometrium. The researchers added up the direct and indirect costs of obesity and inactivity in countries with established economies. Direct costs were those of treatment and indirect costs included loss of productivity and forgone wages due to early mortality.

The cost of inactivity alone was 24 billion dollars, or 2.4% of U.S. health care expenditures. The direct costs of obesity, in 1995 dollars, amounted to some \$70 billion. Together, obesity and inactivity account for 9.4% of national healthcare spending. According to the study's author, the results of inactivity remain a major avoidable contribution to health costs in this and other mechanized nations where physical labor has been replaced with sedentary occupations and motorized transportation.

**Source:** Colditz GA. Economic costs of obesity and inactivity. *Med Sci Sports Exer.* 1999 (Nov);31:663-667. (Abs)