

Report Confirms Obesity Hurts Your Wallet And Your Health

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON — Obesity puts a drag on the wallet as well as health, especially for women.

Doctors have long known that medical bills are higher for the obese, but that's only a portion of the real-life costs.

George Washington University researchers added in things like employee sick days, lost productivity, even the need for extra gasoline — and found the annual cost of being obese is \$4,879 for a woman and \$2,646 for a man.

That's far more than the cost of being merely overweight — \$524 for women and \$432 for men, concluded the report being released Tuesday, which analyzed previously published studies to come up with a total.

Why the difference between the sexes? Studies suggest larger women earn less than skinnier women, while wages don't differ when men pack on the pounds. That was a big surprise, said study co-author and health policy professor Christine Ferguson.

Researchers had expected everybody's wages to suffer with obesity, but "this indicates you're not that disadvantaged as a guy, from a wage perspective,"

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DR. KEVIN SCHULMAN

said Ferguson, who plans to study why. Then consider that obesity is linked to earlier death. While that's not something people usually consider a pocket-book issue, the report did average in the economic value of lost life. That brought women's annual obesity costs up to \$8,365, and men's to \$6,518.

The report was financed by one of the manufacturers of gastric banding, a type of obesity surgery.

The numbers are in line with other research and aren't surprising, said Dr. Kevin Schulman, a professor of medicine and health economist at Duke University who wasn't involved in the new report.

Two-thirds of Americans are either overweight or obese, and childhood obesity has tripled in the past three decades. Nearly 18 percent of adoles-

cents now are obese, facing a future of diabetes, heart disease and other ailments.

Looking at the price tag may help policymakers weigh the value of spending to prevent and fight obesity, said Schulman, pointing to factors like dietary changes over the past 30 years and physical environments that discourage physical activity.

"We're paying a very high price as a society for obesity, and why don't we think about it as a problem of enormous magnitude to our economy?" he asks. "We're creating obesity and we need to do a man-on-the-moon effort to solve this before those poor kids in elementary school become diabetic middle-aged people."

A major study published last year found medical spending averages \$1,400 more a year for the obese than normal-weight people. Tuesday's report added mostly work-related costs — things like sick days and disability claims — related to those health problems.

It also included a quirky finding, a study that calculated nearly 1 billion additional gallons of gasoline are used every year because of increases in car passengers' weight since 1960.

Alaska: Murkowski Says GOP Leaders Turned Backs On Her

BY BECKY BOHRER
Associated Press Writer



Murkowski

JUNEAU, Alaska — U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski said Monday she feels their backs on her as she mounts a write-in bid to try to hold onto her seat.

Murkowski, who lost last month's GOP primary to tea-party-supported Joe Miller, told The Associated Press that she understands this, though: GOP leaders are "committed to a process that is pretty absolute."

"You've got a situation where people are, they're counting numbers. And if it's a Republican body, that's the body we want," she said in an interview from Anchorage. "Here in Alaska, what I hear so often is, I vote for the individual. I look at the person, I don't really get myself tied into the party label."

She said she recognizes that Alaska is a conservative state. "But I also recognize that in order to get things done, we take the good ideas from our colleagues that are on the other side of the aisle, we work to advance policies and proposals that are good for everybody, not just the Republicans."

Later, she added: "We all know that Washington, D.C., is far too partisan right now. And I think when we allow the numbers to dominate over quality, I don't think that that helps us."

When Murkowski conceded the race Aug. 31, support within the Republican establishment began shifting to Miller, a self-described "constitutional conservative" who believes the federal government is on the brink of bankruptcy, spending must be

reined in, and Alaska must be given greater control over its resources to help wean it off what he calls its over-dependency on the government.

Miller, endorsed by Sarah Palin during the primary race, has since garnered support from several of Murkowski's colleagues and the National Republican Senatorial Committee. The committee has pledged at least \$212,000 to help him win and has urged her to get on the bandwagon and back Miller.

Murkowski said she can't endorse Miller, who she says has espoused ideas outside the mainstream, or Scott McAdams, the Democratic challenger and small-town mayor she calls likable but inexperienced. She said she has heard from an overwhelming number of Alaskans that they also couldn't support either candidate — and she ultimately decided to run to give those Alaskans a choice.

NATIONAL FARM SAFETY & HEALTH WEEK



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Farm Shop Safety

Service and maintenance tasks can often lead to serious injury. The farm shop and the field are the primary locations where repair operations are completed. Make sure your farm shop is part of a farm safety solution, not a problem.

- Organize your workshop so that everything has a designated place. Make sure items are secure so they will not fall on anyone.
- Clean walkways to reduce trips and falls.
- When working on agricultural equipment, make sure that the equipment is turned off, all rotating parts have stopped moving, and safety locks are put in place.
- Keep all guards and shields in place on power equipment.
- Use hand tools only for their intended purpose.
- Equip your shop with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters to help prevent electrical shock.
- Make sure your shop is well lit. If the shop is heated, ensure it is properly vented and that flammable liquids are kept out of the shop area.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when performing repair jobs. Standard PPE for a farm shop should include leather gloves, chemical-resistant gloves, safety glasses, face shields, earplugs or muffs, steel-toed boots, respirators, hard hats, protective aprons and welding shields.

Tractor Safety

Farm tractors provide the primary source of power on many farms. Studies show that the farm tractor is involved in a high proportion of farm fatalities and severe injuries. To avoid them, follow safe management principles and implement a tractor safety program on your farm.

- Develop a "safety first" attitude. Follow safe work practices all the time and set a good example for others.
- Be physically and mentally fit when operating tractors. Fatigue, stress, medication, alcohol and drugs can detract from safe tractor operation. Take breaks.
- Read operator's manual and warning decals. Pay attention to safety information.
- Equip the tractor with a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) and wear seat belts.

Tractor Safety continued...

- Inspect the tractor for any hazards and correct them before operating.
- Make sure everyone who operates a tractor has received training and is physically able to operate it safely.
- Shut down equipment, turn off engine, remove key and wait for moving parts to stop before dismounting equipment.
- Keep bystanders and others away from tractor operation area. Do not allow "extra riders," especially children.

Livestock Handling

Farm workers, ranchers, family members and visitors are injured every year by livestock. Many of these injuries occur when handling livestock.

- Label livestock handling areas to warn away visitors.
- Design livestock pens and handling facilities using recommended plans.
- All facilities should be designed to allow workers easy access to and exit from animals.
- Make sure to consistently and properly use restraining equipment.
- Equip pens with emergency exits.
- Keep children and bystanders out of livestock handling areas.
- Animals can be unpredictable. Be sure you understand some of the common instincts of animals.
 - A strong territorial instinct is common.
 - Changes in lighting or shadows can excite or spook them.
 - Separation from other animals can cause unpredictable behavior.
 - Sudden or loud noises can frighten animals.
 - Some types of livestock, such as beef cattle, swine and dairy cattle, are colorblind and have poor depth perception. This causes them to be sensitive to contrasts in light, movement, and noises.
 - Cattle and horses can see everything around them except directly behind their hindquarters.

Source: <http://www.nsc.org>

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