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Obesity and Work Comp: Is it Affecting You?

For more than two decades, obesity has been featured as the next killer for America. Obesity in the workplace, obesity at home, obesity at school, obesity in eating establishments...it is never ending. Due to this, many "get healthy" programs have been implemented nationwide. This has been deemed a nationwide epidemic, and there are some reports that state this upcoming generation will be the first generation who may not outlive their parents due to health problems caused by obesity. Think its not a problem? Think again. According to the CDC ([published in a newsrecord.com article](#)), the average 10-year-old in the United States weighs 10 pounds more than the average child in the 1960s , and that translates into adult obesity(with the average adult weighing approximately 25 pounds more than his/her 1960s counterpart).

Maybe your organization has taken an active role in trying to help with the obesity epidemic. Maybe you have introduced a wellness plan, hoping to get your employees involved within an active lifestyle. After all, studies have shown that family members who take an active role in exercise have healthier families.

Perhaps a wellness program is not in the cards for your organization. However, have you taken some time to think about how the obese population may be affecting your organization? Is production slower? Are injuries becoming more prevalent due to inactive employees injuring themselves? Are your work comp rates increasing? It may be hard to correlate the injury to the obese party, but think of this alarming information, Hoosiers increased their listing (in terms of ranking) for [states being the fattest](#). From 2010-2011 we jumped two spots. We are now ranked 15 out of 50 for the "fattest state".

[Joshua Clifton, editor of the Workers' Compensation Report](#), state the total cost of obesity to U.S. companies is estimated at \$13 billion per year. Clifton also points out that obesity is also a major contributing factor in industrial accidents (even when obesity is not a factor in causing a traumatic injury, researchers say it can complicate treatment and extend the time necessary for recovery).

Maybe you haven't given it much thought? Well you might want to.

As [Key Risk author Robert Standen](#) points out, Obesity often contributes to complications in the recovery process and the ability to reach maximum medical improvement. He additionally points out that, obese workers frequently require more medical treatment for a longer period. A [Duke University Medical Center analysis](#) found obese workers filed twice the number of workers' compensation claims, had seven times higher medical costs from those claims and lost 13 times more days of work from work injury or work illness than did non-obese workers.

Maybe obesity is affecting your organization. Not sure where to turn? In January of this year, the [Indiana's Comprehensive Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan](#) was launched to guide Hoosier efforts to have an outcome where all Hoosiers practice and enjoy a lifestyle containing physical activity, healthy eating and an environment supporting health, wellness and vitality. Additionally, many insurance companies are offering wellness programs, or resources to access these programs.

References:

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