

AN ONLINE NEWSLETTER FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

# Making Healthy Choices



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## Average Health Insurance Premiums

How much are companies paying for health insurance for their employees? A survey of 1,927 employers gives these average costs for employees:<sup>1</sup>

- Single: \$4,704 (the worker contributes \$721, the company \$3,983)
- Family: \$12,680 (the worker contributes \$3,354, the company \$9,325)

These are huge costs for both individuals and companies and points out that the healthcare system needs to put more emphasis on preventing disease and enhancing health rather than just paying medical bills for health problems that could have been prevented. The primary cost of healthcare is from chronic disease. Research shows that most of these diseases are preventable by living a healthy lifestyle.<sup>2</sup> For example:

- The Nurses' Health Study showed that up to 90% of type 2 diabetes is caused from unhealthy lifestyles (obesity, inactivity, poor diet, and smoking).
- The Chicago Heart Study showed that up to 70-80% of heart disease is caused by poor health habits (obesity, inactivity, poor diet, and smoking).
- The American Cancer society estimates that the majority of cancers are caused from unhealthy lifestyle (smoking, obesity, inactivity, and poor diet).
- A study on high blood pressure, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, showed that over 70% of people taking blood pressure medication for high blood pressure were able to stop their medication and control their high blood pressure without medicine by making these same healthy lifestyle changes.

If companies would encourage all employees to simply start a walking program (30+ minutes of brisk walking daily), they could positively impact their employees' health. Research shows that compared to sedentary persons, people who exercise regularly would have a:

- 45% reduced risk of cancer
- 60% reduced risk of diabetes
- 48% reduced risk of heart disease
- 62-65% reduced risk of hip fractures
- 68% fewer strokes
- 57% decreased rate of developing high blood pressure
- 34% decreased risk of catching a cold

In addition, other research shows that regular physical activity decreases the risk for depression, colon cancer, breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, anxiety, sleep problems, obesity, falls, COPD, dementia, back and knee pain, and constipation. Active people also have more energy, feel better, are more optimistic, and live longer.

High healthcare costs will not come down until everyone takes personal responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. You will never be sorry you invested time and effort in improving the health of your employees or your own personal health.

**References:**

1. Kaiser/HRET Employer Health Benefits telephone survey of 1,927 companies. Reported in *USA Today*. Feb. 20, 2009.
2. Don Hall, DrPH, CHES. *Step into Fitness and Health*. 2009.



Start an easy walking program in your company. Here's how:

1. Give every employee the personal walking guide, *Step into Fitness and Health*.
2. Give every employee a pedometer.
3. Signup for GetFit Adventures™. Employees log their daily activity to complete motivating virtual adventures all over the world, track their daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly progress online, and receive awards. Learn more.

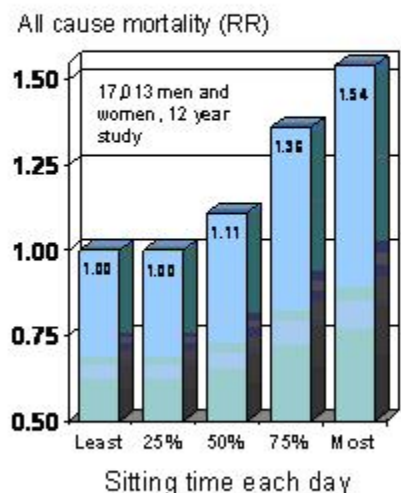


### Sitting May be Hazardous to Your Health

How much do you sit during a typical day? Researchers asked more than 17,000 men and women, "How much time do you spend sitting during most days of the week?" Then they followed these people for the next 12 years and measured mortality rates.

Here is what the researchers found: Those people who sat at least half the time during the day (at work, at home, or school) had a significantly increased risk of dying from any cause. Those who sat the most had a 54% increased risk of dying during the 12 years compared to people who sat the least.

## Sitting Time and Risk of Mortality



Researchers found a strong association with sitting time daily and risk of mortality.

As sitting time increases to 50% or more of each day, the risk of death from any cause increases by 11-54%.

Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise 41:998-1005, May 2009

This increased risk from long periods of sitting was independent of how old you were, if you smoked or not, drank alcohol or not, if you were overweight or not, and even if you exercised daily or not. This study suggests that sitting a lot is hazardous to your health and cannot be completely compensated for with a physical activity program.

Americans sit while we eat in the morning. We sit in our cars going to work. We sit most of the day at work or school. We sit coming home in the car at night, and sit in the evening watching TV, playing computer games, or surfing the net.

Think of ways you could be more active throughout the day:

- Getting up frequently at work to walk about when thinking, discussing concepts with individuals, and taking a message to a colleague.
- Standing during meetings, when talking on the phone, or while reading reports. Maybe offices need standing desks as well as sitting desks.
- Working in the garden, going for a walk, working around the house, or playing active games (ping pong or jump rope) instead of watching TV or spending time on the computer at home.
- Commuting to work by riding your bike, taking public transportation (walking to and from the bus stop or train station), or walking or jogging to work occasionally.

In a very sedentary society, we need to begin thinking of ways to sit less and be more active during the majority of our day if we want the best health. Be creative. See what you can do to sit less each day.

The authors of the study concluded by suggesting that for best health and longevity, everyone should maintain a normal body weight (being obese and sitting a lot had the highest mortality), get regular physical activity (30+ minutes, 5+ days each week), and limit the amount of time spent sitting every day.

### Reference:

- Katzmarzyk PT, et al. Sitting time and mortality from all causes. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. 2009;41(5):998-1005.

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## Exercise Lowers Risk for Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer for women – about 182,000 cases each year and over 40,000 deaths annually. What if we could prevent a third or half of these tragedies? A new study suggests that may be possible.

A large study in Texas looked at the relationship between fitness and breast cancer mortality. Over a period of several years, 14,811 women had a treadmill test to determine their fitness level (or *peak aerobic capacity*) and were then followed for 16 years to see who would develop breast cancer. Researchers adjusted for other risks including smoking, body weight, age, alcohol intake, high blood pressure, diabetes, family history of breast cancer, estrogen use, and other possible confounders.

The women were grouped into three categories:

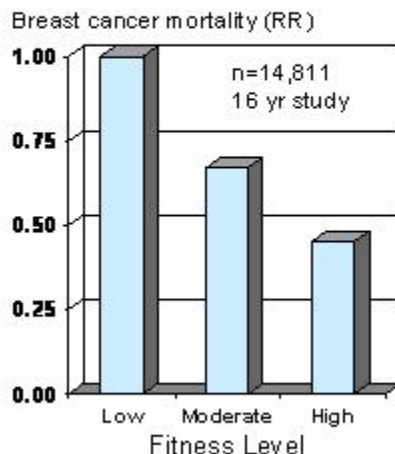
- **Low fitness** (average peak aerobic capacity was 6.7 METs\*)
- **Moderate fitness** (average peak aerobic capacity was 8.5 METs)
- **High fitness** (average peak aerobic capacity was 11.1 METs)

Here is what they found: Compared to the low-fit women, those who exercised enough to reach “moderate fitness” had a third (33%) fewer breast cancer deaths. Those who were highly fit had less than half as many (45%) deaths from breast cancer.

## Exercise and Risk of Breast Cancer

- **Regular exercise reduced the risk of breast cancer by:**
  - 33% in moderately fit women
  - 55% in highly fit women
- **Compared to low fit women in this large prospective study.**

Med Sci Sports Exer 41:742-48, 2009



When women were divided into just two groups, those who had a below-average fitness level (less than 8.0 METs peak aerobic capacity) were three times more likely to die from breast cancer compared to women with a peak aerobic capacity of 10 METs or higher.

These are remarkable results – cutting the risk of breast cancer (the leading cancer for women) in half or more simply by exercising daily. The researchers pointed out that most women can reach the moderate- to high-fitness categories by:

- Getting moderate exercise (such as brisk walking) for 30+ minutes, 5+ days/week,
- Or vigorously exercising for 20-30+ minutes, most days of the week.

The American Cancer Society encourages women to exercise briskly for at least an hour daily for best results in preventing cancer.

**Bottom line:** Women who exercise regularly can cut their risk of breast cancer by one-third to one-half. The only side effect from this kind of medicine is that you will probably look better, feel better, and live longer!

Each day you decide if you are going to exercise or not. When deciding, think of this study and the personal health advantage you may experience. The choice is yours.

**Reference:**

- Peel JB, et al. A Prospective Study of Cardiorespiratory Fitness and Breast Cancer Mortality. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. 2009;41(4):742-748.

\* METs are a measure of exercise intensity. One MET is equivalent to the amount of energy a person expends while sitting quietly. An 8-MET activity requires 8 times as much energy as sitting, and an 11-MET activity requires 11 times the energy of sitting. Average 40-year-old women have a predicted peak aerobic capacity of 9.5 METs. Average 50-year-old women have a peak aerobic capacity of 8.6 METs.

- **METs**



### Meat Intake and Mortality

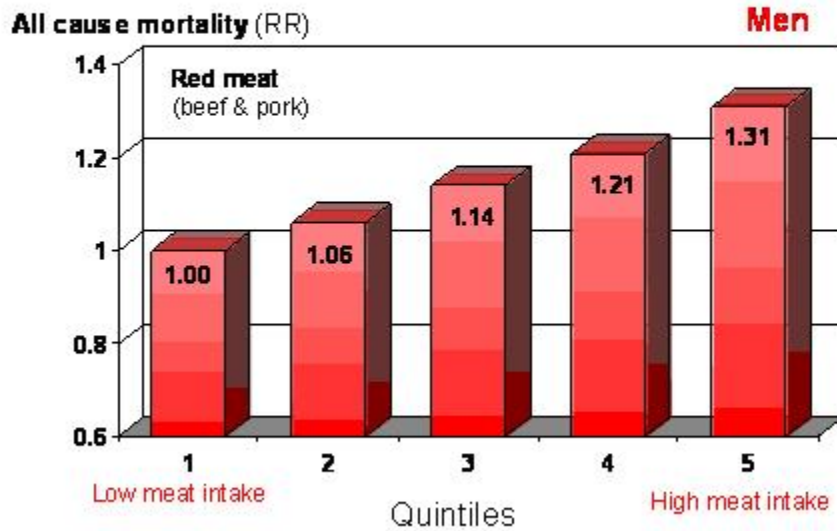
Does eating red meat increase your risk of dying early? That's the question a large health study investigated. The study, which was sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, followed half a million people for 10 years to find out what impact eating red meat had on a person's lifespan. During the study 71,252 persons died.

Researchers compared how much meat individuals ate and mortality levels from all causes, from cardiovascular disease, and from cancer. All types of beef and pork (including bacon, hamburgers, sausage, steak, hotdogs, and red meat in foods such as pizza, chili, lasagna, and stew) were studied.

Here is what they found. In short, the more meat people ate, the higher their risk of an early death. When they compared men who ate the most (top 20%) red meat with those men who ate the least (bottom 20%), researchers found that high meat consumers had a 31% increased risk of dying early from any cause, even after controlling for age, exercise level, body weight, smoking, education level, alcohol intake, and fruit and vegetables intake. Women who ate the most meat had a 36% increased risk of early death from any cause.

The trend was statistically significant as well. At each level of increased intake of red meat in the diet, there was a measurable increase in mortality (see chart below).

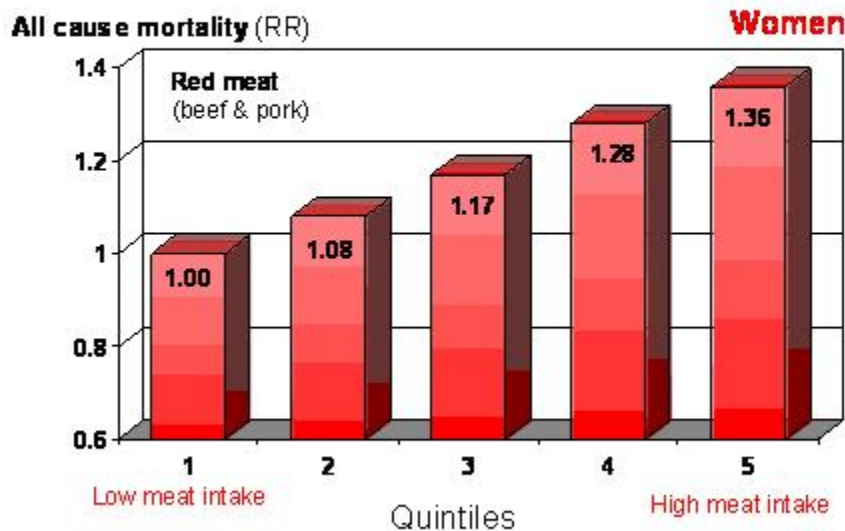
## Meat Intake and Mortality



Archives of Internal Medicine 2009;169(6):562-571

When researchers looked just at processed meats, they found a similar increased risk of early death for those who ate the most compared to those eating the least. People who ate more fish and poultry, however, showed a slight decreased risk compared to those eating red meat. When looking just at cancer mortality, men who ate the most meat had a 22% increased risk of getting cancer and women a 20% increased risk of getting cancer. One good way to reduce your cancer risk is eat less red meat and more legumes, nuts, whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

## Meat Intake and Mortality



Archives of Internal Medicine 2009;169(6):562-571

The research authors estimated that, in men, 1 out of every 10 deaths (an 11% decrease) could have been prevented if men would have eaten less red meat. In women, researchers estimated that 1 out of every 5 deaths (a 21% decrease) could have been prevented if the red meat intake was reduced to low levels (bottom 20% in this study).

These are remarkable health advantages by making a simple dietary change – eat less red meat. Poultry and fish resulted in lower mortality levels as did vegetarian diets. Other dietary changes that have also been shown to lower risk of mortality include eating more:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Nuts and nut butters
- Legumes (peas, beans, lentils, soy, tofu)
- Whole-grain breads, cereals, and pasta

The research is quit clear. If you want to reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, and early death, reduce or eliminate red and processed meats from your diet and choose primarily unrefined, plant-based foods.

#### Reference:

- Sinha R, Cross AJ, et al. Meat Intake and Mortality. *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 2009; 169(6):562-571.

Handouts:

Learn the METs for various activities.



Resources

#### PDFs

- [MET Levels of Common Recreational Activities](#)—MET stands for Metabolic Equivalent

#### Recipes

Meat-less meatballs are great for grilling and meat free.

#### Vegetarian "Meatballs" with Barbecue Sauce

**Meatballs:**

2 c	Textured Vegetable Protein*
1 ½ c	Boiling water
1 T	Soy sauce or Bragg Aminos
1 T	Olive Oil
½ c	Onions, chopped fine
¼ c	Pecans, finely chopped
¼ c	Whole-wheat flour
¼ c	Vital wheat gluten
1 T	Nutritional yeast flakes
1 tsp	Soymilk powder
1 tsp	Beef-style seasoning
½ c	Garlic powder
⅛ tsp	Basil or Italian seasoning
pinch	paprika

\* (TVP)

Mix TVP with water, soy sauce and oil and let stand 10 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly. Shape into 1-inch balls. Place "meatballs" on a baking sheet prepared with cooking spray and bake at 350 degrees F, 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve with barbecue sauce or spaghetti sauce and pasta.

**Yield:** 20 balls

**Barbecue Sauce:**

1 ½ c	Tomato Sauce
3 T	Molasses
2 T	Tomato paste
1 T	Honey
4 tsp	Soy sauce or liquids aminos
2 tsp	Fresh lemon juice
½ tsp	liquid smoke
¼ tsp	Onion powder
⅛ tsp	Garlic powder
2 tsp	Instant Clear-Jel

In a blender, combine all ingredients, except Clear-Jel, and process until well mixed. Set blender on medium speed, remove lid spout and add Clear-Jel to blender while in motion. Mixture will thicken in 5 to 10 seconds.

**Yield:** 2 cups

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What's New at Wellsorce



**Register now for our rescheduled webinar on July 15, 2009.**

You've built your business case for wellness and implemented a wellness program...but it isn't as successful as it could or should be. In today's economy, you probably don't have the time or money for a trial-and-error approach to wellness. What you need is a successful approach right now. The **"Rescuing Your Wellness Program"** webinar is designed for just your situation.

Susan Heiser, M.Ed., President of Pro-Health Systems, Inc., will help you identify:

- What went wrong
- What went right
- "First-aid" recommendations for not only reviving your wellness program, but making it first-rate.

In addition to the webinar, you'll receive a link to the Wellsource® Wellness Program Marketing Kit with free samples, downloads, and suggestions for wellness success in any environment.

**Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2009**

10-11 a.m. Pacific  
11-12 a.m. Mountain  
12-1 p.m. Central  
1-2 p.m. Eastern

For more information, or to register, contact Teri Tamayose at 1-800-533-9355 or e-mail, [terit@wellsource.com](mailto:terit@wellsource.com).

Stay tuned for other upcoming webinars by accessing our [events calendar](#).



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#### About Making Healthy Choices

The Making Healthy Choices™ newsletter is written by Don Hall, DrPH, CHES, founder and CEO of Wellsource, Inc. with contribution from associated health professionals. It is available as a resource to Wellsource clients and other select organizations involved in promoting health.

Selected content is general health information from evidence-based research. Its purpose is not to treat disease but to promote healthy lifestyles. Persons with health problems should consult their physician for specific guidance.

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