

Treating obesity: The cost of inaction

Obesity is a chronic disease

Obesity is a chronic and progressive disease that's associated with more than 200 weight-related health conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and many cancers.¹ Obesity is the result of complex interactions between genetic, environmental, behavioural, biological and social factors—not a lack of willpower.¹

Canadians living with obesity face widespread weight-based discrimination because it continues to be viewed as a self-inflicted condition. This misconception contributes to the lack of medical interventions available to those living with obesity.²



Untreated obesity costs billions of dollars

A failure to recognize obesity as a chronic and progressive disease has resulted in substantial economic consequences. A new Obesity Canada report shows the cost of inaction for treating obesity in Canada has surpassed **\$27 billion**—20% higher than previous estimates.²

The report found the incremental annual cost to Canada's health-care system is \$5.9 billion. Workplace productivity costs were three times that, surpassing \$21 billion, including:²

\$8.2B

reduced
workforce
participation

\$6.8B

presenteeism

\$3.8B

lower earnings
among employed
individuals with
obesity

\$2.0B

lost wages
due to premature
mortality

\$682M

absenteeism

\$268M

disability
pensions

Despite these costs, fewer than **20%** of Canadians with private drug benefits plans have access to obesity treatment medications approved by Health Canada.³

<20%

There's an urgent need to address obesity

In Canada, nearly
one in three
individuals
live with obesity.²



Urgent action is needed. By investing in effective obesity treatment and prevention strategies, plan sponsors can play an important role in helping address Canada's obesity crisis, supporting Canadians living with this chronic disease, as well as their employers.

Learn more about the cost of inaction in treating obesity at obesitycanada.ca.

References

1. "Understanding obesity." Obesity Canada. Available at: <https://obesitycanada.ca/understanding-obesity/>. Accessed August 1, 2024.
2. "Modeling the cost of inaction in treating obesity in Canada." Obesity Canada. 2024.
3. "Report card on access to obesity care." Obesity Canada. Available at: <https://obesitycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OC-Report-Card-2019-English-Final.pdf>. Accessed August 1, 2024.

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