

## The Cost of Obesity

What is the true cost of overweight and obesity? The Journal of Health Affairs released a study in July 2009 which found that an adult who is overweight or obese spends an average of \$1,400 each year *more* on healthcare than a fit person.

Estimating that two-thirds of Montgomery County's adult population currently ranks in the overweight or obese categories, approximately 358,736 adults in Montgomery County are currently paying more than fit adults for their overall health care. That equates to **\$502 Million in additional annual spend** by local unfit adults versus fit adults.

If just five percent of those unfit adults were to adopt a healthier lifestyle and bring their weight into a healthy category, the projected annual savings would be \$25 Million! And those estimates do not calculate lost productivity costs that can also be improved.

Significantly reducing the BMI levels of five percent of Montgomery County's unfit adults, or just fewer than 18,000 individuals, won't be easy. However, it is a long-term behavior change that we can adopt with personal accountability and community-based encouragement.

Medical researchers in a July 2009 DataWatch report, "Annual Medical Spending Attributable to Obesity: Payer and Service-Specific Estimates," found a strong correlation between the rise of obesity in the United States and the rise in overall medical spending. In fact, they estimated that the medical cost associated with obesity appears to have risen to \$147 Billion per year as of 2008, compared to the estimated \$78.5 Billion just one decade earlier.

One can just imagine that childhood overweight and obesity likewise has a significant impact the health care cost equation. The good news is that families can help reduce current health care and out of pocket costs - including doctor visit costs - simply by helping kids live healthier today.

Keeping kids healthier will also help save health care costs well into the future. All of us are paying a larger share of the cost for care through higher premiums in our private health care and in the cost to provide care to those who are uninsured and underinsured. In fact, one out of three Ohio children relies on Medicaid for their health care. Locally, at The Children's Medical Center of Dayton, 50 percent of patients rely on Medicaid for their health care coverage.