



## **The economic burden of ill health due to diet, physical inactivity, smoking, alcohol, and obesity in the UK: An update to 2006-07 NHS costs.**

Despite claims from the public that physical activity levels in England have increased over the past decade, data suggests otherwise. Physical inactivity is a risk factor for several non-communicable diseases, the leading cause of death globally. Other behavioural risk factors such as smoking, unhealthy diet, and alcohol use contribute to the high mortality rate. To help the UK prioritise public health resource expenditure and resource allocation, this paper calculates the economic burden of the risk factors specified above.

The paper uses data from the 2006-2007 NHS budget for England, which estimates costs by disease category. An important part of the research was to identify the diseases that poor diet, physical inactivity, smoking, alcohol or overweight or obesity give rise to.

The study found that physical inactivity is a considerable burden on the NHS but not as much as poor diet, and overweight and obesity. The direct cost of overweight and obesity to the NHS was found to be £5.1 billion, an increase of £1.1 billion from previous projections. Nevertheless, the costs for both physical inactivity and poor diet have reduced in updated estimates based on 2006-2007 data. The cost of physical inactivity was £0.9 billion.

There are potentially other diseases that could arise because of smoking, unhealthy diet and leading a sedentary lifestyle that were not incorporated in the study. The possible overlap between risk factors was also not addressed so estimates are likely to be higher and the results assume that the NHS budget did not change significantly between 1992-2007.

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