

Losing weight lowers health care costs for adults with type 2 diabetes

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Overweight individuals with diabetes who lose weight by dieting and increasing their physical activity can reduce their health care costs by an average of more than \$500 per year, according to a new study.

"Lifestyle interventions promoting weight loss and physical activity are recommended for overweight and obese people with Type 2 [diabetes](#) to improve their health," said Mark A. Espeland, professor of public health sciences at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and lead author of the study. "This is the first study to show that weight loss can also save money for these individuals by reducing their [health care](#) needs and costs."

The research is published in the Aug. 21 online issue of the journal *Diabetes Care*.

The study evaluated 5,121 obese and overweight people between the ages of 45 and 76 with Type 2 diabetes who participated in the National Institute of Health-sponsored Action for Health in Diabetes (Look AHEAD) study beginning in 2001. Half of the participants at each of the study's 16 sites across the country were randomly assigned to intensive lifestyle intervention (ILI) or diabetes support and education (DSE) programs, and their medical histories were tracked through 2012.

Those in the ILI group had 11 percent fewer hospitalizations and 15 percent shorter hospital stays. They also used fewer prescription medications. Both of these benefits of ILI contributed to an average saving of \$5,280 per person in [health care costs](#) over 10 years (or \$528 per year).

Espeland said the people in the ILI program maintained lower weights and higher levels of [physical activity](#) throughout the study than those in the DSE group, resulting in better control of their diabetes, blood pressure, sleep quality, physical function and symptoms of depression. He added

that the cost savings for those in the ILI group were relatively consistent regardless of age, initial weight, gender or ethnicity.

"Type 2 diabetes is a chronic disease that is affecting more and more adults, increasing their health care needs and costs," Espeland said. "This study shows that by losing weight and being physically active, individuals can reduce these costs."

Provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

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