



Press release

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Obesity leads to more sickness absence

A publication just released by Statistics Netherlands on health and care in 2007 comprises seven articles on a range of recent developments in the area of health and care. The main conclusions are:

- Seriously overweight employees are absent from work on sick leave more often and for longer periods.
- There has been a strong increase in the care for the elderly.
- The mortality differences between native Dutch people and people with a foreign background are decreasing.
- Women's extra years of life expectancy of are not 'healthy' years.
- Spending on care rose by more than 5 percent in 2006.

More time off work for obese workers and smokers

Seriously obese employees are demonstrably absent from work more often than employees in a normal weight range. Not only do they report in sick more often, but they stay off sick longer as well. Workers who smoke also have significantly higher absence rates than non-smokers and former smokers. They report in sick more often.

Strong increase in care for the elderly

The volume of care for the elderly has risen by an average 4 percent per year since 2000. There has been a clear shift from residential care in nursing and care institutions to home care (extramural care). The volume of extramural care has risen by nearly 10 percent a year on average, that of care in residential homes by 2 percent per year. The volume of care is rising faster than the number of patients, which means that the amount of care per person is increasing.

Mortality gap between native and foreign population decreasing

The mortality risk has fallen substantially in recent years. The main reason for this is that fewer people are dying from heart and vascular disease. For people with a non-western foreign background the decrease in the mortality risk was even stronger than the for the native Dutch population. Although this closed the gap between the groups somewhat, the differences in mortality risk are still large. Mortality of infants with a non-western foreign background were still a quarter to a third higher than for native Dutch infants. For young children the difference also remained large. In the group of adolescents and young adults, Antillean men have noticeably relatively high mortality rates.

Women's extra years of life are not healthy years

Average life expectancy at birth and at 65 years is higher for women than for men, but these extra years women have are not always healthy ones. The number of years men and women live in what they perceive as good health and without physical limitations is apparently equal. Life expectancy without chronic illness is even higher for men than for women.

Spending on care up 5 percent in 2006

Spending on health care and welfare amounted to 72.2 billion euro in 2006. This is the equivalent of 4,400 euro per inhabitant, 5.3 percent more than in 2005. The increase was caused mainly by more care, higher wage costs in care institutions, higher tariffs in the free professions and a new financing system for general practitioners.

The publication also contains quality indicators for health care, 1995-2005, and figures on combinations of chronic illnesses in hospital patients aged 55 years and older.