

# Sickness is Costing US Over 250 Billion in Lost Productivity

[E-mail to a friend](#) 

Employees who miss work due to illness or whose performance on the job isn't up to snuff because of chronic or episodic health conditions are costing US employers hundreds of billions of dollars a year.

The top five health conditions alone:

- Headache/pain
- Depression fatigue sad or blue
- Common cold/flu
- Digestive problems
- Arthritis

Cost employers more than \$180 billion annually. The annual financial toll for all health conditions is at least \$250 billion, or roughly \$2,000 per worker per year.

The problem of lost worker productivity goes well beyond absenteeism, with many individuals reporting to work even when they're not feeling well, the study reveals. The phenomenon, called "presenteeism," is often invisible to employers, yet it **accounts for more than two-thirds of health-related lost labor costs**, it found.

AdvancePCS, one of the nation's largest pharmacy benefits management companies, studies the connection between health and work performance through its Center for Work and Health. That unit launched the American Productivity Audit, an ongoing daily national survey of US workers, last year. The study is based on 10 months of data and more than 25,000 interviews with US workers.

The analysis provides a better understanding of the impact of health conditions on work performance.

According to the survey, more than 80% of women and 70% of men reported at least one episodic or chronic-episodic health condition in the 2-week period prior to being interviewed. While 38% of women and 28% of men reported being at work one or more days during that 2-week period and not feeling well, only 7.2% of women and 5.3% of men actually missed a day of work in the previous 2 weeks for a health reason.

In fact, almost three-quarters of the lost productivity from episodic and chronic conditions occurs on the job.

The study also found that the average **US worker loses 115 hours of productivity every year due to a health condition**. And, for any single condition, 20% to 35% of employees account for 70% to 80% of the lost time.

[AdvancePCS Study](#) **June 5, 2002**

---

## **DR. MERCOLA'S COMMENT:**

[E-mail to a friend](#) 

**This should be a strong incentive for employers to encourage their employees to follow [optimal health guidelines](#).**

**Investing time and resources in these areas could have a profound economic benefit to the company's bottom line.**

**Economic incentives are frequently necessary for business owners to make changes. I suspect the surprising data from this study will go a long way toward motivating businesses to adopt more aggressive health policies.**