

Letters to Dr. Walter Bortz II

Dear Dr. Bortz: Did you get a report about the recent findings in the California Center for Public Health Advocacy on California's costs due to overweight, obesity and inactivity?

– Dylan Barrow, Bakersfield, CA

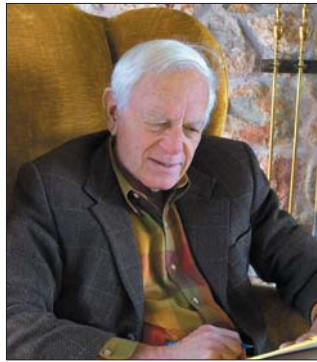
Dear Dylan:

This is an area that I watch closely. The lead researcher Dr. David Chenoweth from North Carolina is a personal friend, and he and I have collaborated to create for the *Lifelong Fitness Alliance* a cost calculator for these common conditions. His current data in this report reflects a totality of costs of \$41 billion. These are derived both from healthcare costs and productivity lost to inactivity. Half are attributed to overweight and half to inactivity.

Let's see: for a California population of 37 million--27 million adults--\$41 billion divided by 27 million persons is \$1500.00 per person per year. Data from professor Hill in Denver predicates that 25 pounds is the average amount of overweight per person.

Therefore, \$1500 divided by 25 pounds equals \$60 per pound per year. The importance of these figures derives from the reality that they are not in any way an abstraction.

While we search for practical opportunities to do this, I personally feel that the best opportunity at present is embodied in the activities of the *Lifelong Fitness Alliance*, whose president Jim Warren has another article in this magazine. Our group targets health and healthcare costs as



shared concerns and creates local programs to help each of us.

Dear Dr. Bortz: I believe that I read somewhere that among your various publications were several which dealt with sexual activity in our later years. I'm 74 years old and still feel that sex is a vital part of my current, and I hope, future life. Any update you can suggest?

– Bill Singleton, Oakland, CA

Dear Bill. You are right. I have published three scientific papers dealing with sex and aging, mostly in males. In addition, I dedicated a chapter on the topic in my first book, *"We Live Too Short and Die Too Long."* The title of the chapter was *"Snow On the Roof But Fire in the Furnace."*

The major points of this work were that in order to have sex in the later years, three requirements must be met.

First is no medicines—drugs diminish good sex.

Second, remain healthy. Sickness of any pedigree penalizes sexual satisfaction. Pain is particularly harmful.

Third, one must have a congenial, willing, sexual partner if the good bargain is to be struck.

I wrote an article in the *Western Journal of Medicine* entitled "Physical Fitness, Aging and Sexuality." It reported on a survey which I conducted with 1,039 members of **Lifelong Fitness** over the age of 50—389 females and 632 males. Of particular interest were those over 70 years of age. Of these 48 females and 137 men, 60% of the men and 31% of females reported very or adequate satisfaction with their sexual life. 26% and 27% reported dissatisfaction or very dissatisfied.

In 1997, a paper published in the *British Medical Journal* was entitled *"Sex and Death. Are They Related?"* It concerned a 1983 survey of the entire male population of Caerphilly in South Wales.

Ten years after the initial survey was conducted, it appeared that of the 150 men who had died, those who were sexually active had only half the mortality of the sexually inactive group.

This prompted the following editorial quote: "what we thought was bad for you may actually be good for you but it might not be good to tell you it is good for you if you do too much of it already."

The summary statement seems to be "use it or lose it."

Dr. Walter Bortz II, is one of America's most distinguished scientific experts on aging. He has spent his career at Stanford University where he holds the position of Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine. He has written five books and run 38 marathons. Would you like to send a letter to Dr. Bortz? Email him at DrWBortz@aol.com or visit www.walterbortz.com.