



# Apps for Health

Apple recently celebrated its 50 billionth app download and Google Play has over 1 million apps available in its store. While many of the apps are primarily for entertainment, there are quite a few that are designed to help us with our health goals. A search for the term “health” in iTunes results in over 9,000 apps. With so many options, where do you start?



## Do health apps really help?

The benefits of taking an active role in our own health have been known for years. People who track what they eat and how often they exercise tend to better manage their weight. People with diabetes who monitor their own blood sugar tend to be healthier than those who don't. Early research suggests that health apps may help us do these activities better and as a result see even more benefits.



## Are health apps safe to use?

Like any trend, there are better apps and ones that we should probably skip. Apps that help us be more consistent in our health promoting activities, but don't offer specific medical advice are the safest bet. Apps that help you track what you eat can be helpful, but be careful of apps that suggest what you should or shouldn't eat. Apps that help you monitor your blood sugar if you have diabetes can be helpful, but watch out for apps that suggest changes in your medication or diet. Health apps can be helpful tools, but are not a replacement for the advice of a trained medical professional.



## How to choose a health app:

Look for trusted developers and providers. You want an app that will offer you accurate, helpful content and not compromise your personal information or the security of your mobile device. Ask your healthcare provider. They may have suggestions for apps they have tried. Read the reviews. If an app has consistently negative feedback, it probably isn't a good choice.

For a list of apps reviewed by Registered Dietitians visit [eatright.org/appreviews](http://eatright.org/appreviews).



#### REFERENCES:

1. Carter MC, Burley VI, Nykjaer C, Cade JE. Adherence to a smartphone application for weight loss compared to website and paper diary: pilot randomized controlled trial. *J Med Internet Res*. 2013 Apr 15;15(4).
  2. Stephens J, Allen J. Mobile phone interventions to increase physical activity and reduce weight: a systematic review. *J Cardiovasc Nurs*. 2013 Jul-Aug;28(4):320-9.
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