

**Q.** Will a fitness tracking device help me get fit?

**A.** Strap it on your wrist. Download the app. Sync it with your smartphone. Click, swipe, and tap to improve your health.

That's the idea behind fitness tracking devices and mobile apps. They're made to track your daily habits, like:

- Steps
- Heart rate
- Water intake
- Food choices
- Sleep patterns
- Breathing
- Miles

But will owning one make you healthier?<sup>1</sup> Here are some things you can do to get the most out of your fitness tracker:

### Do Your Homework

Not all fitness tracking devices and apps are the same. For example, not all devices can measure heart rate. If you want to use a fitness tracking tool to improve your health, do your homework.

Choose a device, app, or wearable that has the features you want and need.

Research shows wearable tech combined with healthy habits can help you make positive changes.<sup>2</sup>

### Pay Attention to Feedback

Digital fitness tools may help you develop healthy habits, but they have their limits. For example:

Your device can't force you out of bed.



It can't make you workout or go to the gym.

It doesn't handle grocery shopping or cook healthy meals.

Fitness tracking devices and apps are designed to collect data about your habits, then help you make better choices. But for that to happen, you need to pay attention to the feedback.<sup>3</sup> Then it's up to you to make behavior changes.

### Connect Offline

Forget about your phone, device, apps and tech tools for a minute, and think about this. You're more likely to:

**Get to the gym** or show up for a workout if you know a friend is expecting you.

**Make smart food choices** when you have to show a coach, trainer, or doctor what you're eating every day.

When you have to check in with someone, you're more likely to make better choices about your health.

### Connect Online

Most fitness trackers also have features that allow you to connect with friends on social media, compete in virtual events, and share your progress. That's a great way to stay on track, too.

## ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

One study that combined the use of digital devices and social media help people double their weekly exercise efforts in three months.<sup>4</sup>

### Be Consistent

After the novelty of getting a new fitness tracking device, what happens? A lot of people quit. You know the trend for most New Year's resolutions. If you want to get the most out of your fitness tracking device, use it every day.

Track your steps, miles, and heart rate. Record your weight, sleep patterns and food choices. And measure your progress from week to week, and month to month.

You'll have a better sense of your overall health. And you'll have a lot of data to help motivate you to make better choices about food, fitness, and your health.

### References

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