Best Apps for Weight Loss

By Jenna Birch , January 15, 2016

When mom and dad wanted to lose weight, they were stuck with a paper journal and a calculator to track calorie consumption every day. Losing weight in the digital age is more convenient with apps to keep tabs on meals, fitness and your overall progress. As long as you are aware of numbers and remember to plug-and-chug, you will be set for success.

First, there are a few important concepts to understand how weight loss and calorie counter apps work.

Ideal Weight

Finding your "ideal weight" isn't an exact science. There are tons of formulas out there for determining your ideal weight. You are probably most familiar with the weight range for Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a good place to start. In addition, there are also calculators that give you goal weights based on formulas developed by scientists.

Your ideal weight is generally the weight at which your body feels its best, has the lowest disease risk, and peak performance yet, for many; it feels out of reach. Ultimately, you want to settle at a weight that is sustainable long-term, so choosing a realistic target weight is crucial. [***Link out to our ideal weight story in this section]

Setting Goals

With most weight-loss apps, you will find a place to track your target weight and target date for reaching your goal. Although it would be amazing to drop 20 pounds in three weeks, it is better to be smart about your goals and make healthy, reasonable lifestyle changes that are sustainable long-term not create a goal that may lead to disordered eating or yo-yo dieting for years to come.

When it comes to making a lifestyle change and creating healthy-eating habits that will really take hold, "slow and steady wins the race" should be your mantra. Set a target date that equates to a maximum of one to two pounds of weight loss per week. From there, the app should generate a daily calorie goal based on your basal metabolic rate (BMR) or the amount of energy your body expends at rest, your typical exercise, and how quickly you want to lose. Your objective is to create a calorie deficit; the app will let you know how many calories you are allowed.

Tracking Calories

What are the two most essential ingredients in a weight-loss app? The calorie-counter function and the calorie-burner function. These two components make up your virtual diary for food and exercise. After you eat a meal or a snack, plug in the type of food you ate and the quantity. After you complete a workout, plug in the type of exercise and the length.

It's important to plug in values immediately after a meal or a workout. If wait until later, you might forget the details and you will not be nearly as aware of your running calorie total for the day. At first, this might feel laborious, but it will soon become part of your routine. Do not give up.

Selecting an App

There are a lot of great weight loss apps; but the best apps are easy to use and appealing. Many apps not only track calories but will break down nutrient consumption, therefore helping you reach mini goals that contribute to overall health. This can be especially nice for those with special dietary needs, like someone eating to overcome an iron deficiency. WelWelWel has identified the best apps out there, based on ease of use, the comprehensiveness of the calorie counter, the ease of identification of fats, carbohydrates and proteins.

Here are the WelWelWel recommendations for you to try:

- *MyFitnessPal*. Simplest to use, allowing you to save frequent meals in your regimen and the workouts you complete regularly.
- *Fooducate*. Along with tracking, Fooducate also distinguishes letter grades for your food choices (from A to D) and offers alternatives to up your nutritional game.
- *Lose It!* This app is the most visual; if pictures appeal to you and provide that added boost to actually use your app, try this vibrant tracker tool.
- *SparkPeople*. With over 3.5 million food entries and a barcode scanner, it couldn't be easier to track what you eat. The app also provides exercise short demos by licensed trainers, so you learn how to burn those calories.
- *Noom Coach*. If you want more than just a calorie tracker, try Noom Coach. Every morning, the app gives you a personalized plan which includes a few healthy lifestyle goals to work on and reminders throughout the day to stay on course. The full version is $49, but the science-backed approach is well worth it.

If you are unsure, try each app for a week to see which one fits best with your lifestyle and goals.

Sources:

http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/expert-answers/fast-weight-loss/faq-20058289