



Finding good health apps

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FINDING GOOD HEALTH-RELATED MOBILE APPS

That mobile phone in your pocket is an incredibly powerful device. It has the power to connect you to a vast range of digital tools that can positively impact on your physical and mental health. It might be meditation apps (e.g. <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>) or apps designed to help you build resilience (<https://onemindpsyberguide.org/apps/superbetter/>)



The challenge is finding good tools amongst a sea of crappy ones. There are (no joke) hundreds of thousands of health-related apps across both the Apple and Android app stores. Worse still, even the best health and mental health apps have only modest effects on health, so it is important to find decent ones.

Fortunately, there are a few sites that can help you weed out the good ones from the crappy ones.



Head to Health

If you're trying to improve your own mental health, or support somebody else with their mental health, Head to Health provides links to trusted Australian online and phone supports, resources and treatment options, including mobile apps.
<https://headtohealth.gov.au/>







ReachOut

Reachout is a website focused on the health and wellbeing of young people. Their tools and apps section includes professionally-reviewed mobile apps that help you look after your health and wellbeing.
<https://au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps>



eMHPrac

eMHPrac is a resource for mental health professionals but their list of mental health focused websites and apps is quite comprehensive, and you can browse by topic.
<https://www.emhprac.org.au/directory/>

	<p>NHS Apps Library The NHS website is the UK's biggest health website. Recently they started documenting mobile apps they think might be of value to consumers. The list is growing fast and can be searched or browsed by topic. https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/</p>
	<p>Vic Health Healthy Living Apps Vic Health spent some time reviewing health apps in 2018. The results of their reviews can be found at this address - https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/vichealth-apps Includes apps for wellbeing, healthy eating, physical activity, drug and alcohol use,</p>
	<p>ORCHA is the World's leading health app evaluation and advisor organisation. They provide advice to health professionals and organisations. Their extensive app library is available online - https://appfinder.orchac.co.uk/</p>
	<p>One Mind PsyberGuide is a non-profit project that aims to help people to use technology to live a mentally healthier life. They professionally review digital mental tools with a focus on mental health apps - https://onemindpsyberguide.org/</p>

How do I know which apps are good and which ones are not?

Here are a few things to ask yourself when determining whether an app is likely to be beneficial.

1. Did I pick the app on the basis of a recommendation I got from one of the sites above?
2. Is it clear who made the app? Is this person or organisation reputable?
3. Do a Google search and see if the app has been reviewed.
4. Is there any evidence that health professionals were involved in the development of the app?
5. Is there any evidence that the app has been tested in scientific studies? (this is still quite rare, so excellent if you can find evidence the app has been tested). If they have been tested, what were the results?
6. Is the app well reviewed within its respective app store?
7. How is the app funded? The source of the funding might point to some potential bias in the app (e.g. funded by a pharmaceutical company).
8. Is it clear how your private information is handled?
9. Are the makers of the app making overly positive claims about the app? Look out for apps promising 'quick fixes' or 'secret strategies'.

Even the best apps have only modest impacts on health and should not be considered a replacement for professional care.

Some apps are intended to supplement already well-established interventions

Many apps aren't intended to be health promoting, but instead to supplement and add value to existing activities that are likely to be healthy (e.g. exercise).

For example, the big tech companies (Apple, Google, Samsung) all have apps for their devices that help you track exercise, diet and sleep. So do the companies who make wearables (like Fitbit).

In these cases, the benefit from the app comes more from encouraging you to engage in healthy eating, regular exercise and better sleep.

I can't find what I am looking for

Are you looking for a particular type of health or mental health app, but can't find what you are looking for? Drop me a line and I will try to help you find something appropriate – gareth.furber@flinders.edu.au

