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Wearing (Putting on) Your Health Data

As a late adopter of all things tech, I recently joined the world of wearable health technology. While I had mindfulness apps and hiking trail apps on my phone, I had yet to tap into the incredible innovation of personal health tracking.

Let's face it: the only person who can really take charge of your health is you! Your physician and other health specialists are certainly your teammates, but ultimately you are the coach and trainer. As with all good practitioners, having the right tools can make all the difference. They can empower you to take better control of your own well-being by monitoring real-time data and potentially detecting health issues early. This allows you to take preventative measures and explore timely interventions to improve your well-being.

What does wearable technology do?

Wearable technology comes in many evolving forms, from medical-grade devices (such as heart rate and blood pressure monitors, and glucose readers) to consumer-grade devices (such as fitness trackers, smartwatches, smart rings, and smart clothing).

These innovative devices can monitor vital signs, physical activity, and sleep patterns, all while tracking and recording your data. This information and feedback can be invaluable to motivating and informing a user about how to upgrade healthy habits.

Wearable technology can also be beneficial for those managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and asthma, as it can provide seamless monitoring and alerts. The

devices can be used to continuously monitor blood glucose levels, heart rate and irregular heart rhythms, respiratory patterns, and more.

This real-time data can help with early identification of trends, triggers, and potential issues. Users can enhance their partnership with their medical teams by sharing information that supports the team to monitor their condition, track their progress, and quickly respond to concerns, requiring fewer visits to the physician's office.

Wearable technology can also support mental health by tracking stress and moods, as well as delivering mindfulness messaging to remind users to prioritize their emotional, as well as physical, well-being.

Overall health can be promoted through easy tracking of sleep quality, physical activity, and fitness goals including detecting and recording specific types of activities and calculating everything from sleep depth, duration, oxygen levels, and snoring, to distance, steps, and calories burned. Users can manually log workouts and food intake while they keep track of their personalized health and fitness goals. These tools provide instant feedback and motivational features such as reminders, challenges, and rewards to keep users active and amplify the attraction of a healthier lifestyle.

Cautions

It is important to remember that a regular smartwatch or fitness tracker is a consumer-grade and not a medical-grade product. Users need to understand the limits of their device's accuracy, and not rely solely on their wearable to report concerns. Users should continue to have regular annual physical exams with a physician, as well as making an appointment anytime there is a concern.

Similarly, as with other technology applications, it is critical to research the privacy settings that determine the data security of a wearable and how personal information is used.

Is wearable technology right for you?

For those like me who may be late adopters, this week's ReFresh may encourage you to incorporate a wearable device into your daily routine. I still have a steep learning curve to maximize how my watch can boost my health, but I am interested to keep exploring!

Oh, and what timing. My watch just told me to get up, as I have been sitting for too long! *Gotta move!*

Sources

<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2024/05/01/wearable-tech-and-byod-benefits-and-risks-in-healthcare-technology/>

<https://mcpres.mayoclinic.org/living-well/benefits-of-a-smart-wearable-for-your-health/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.