

Pick Up the Cell Phone, Drop the Pounds

August 13 2007

Cell phone owners use their phones for much more than talking to friends: surfing the web, snapping pictures, listening to music. How about using that cell phone to lose weight?

Researchers with the PACE (Patient-centered Assessment and Counseling for Exercise and Nutrition) project at University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, want to find out if cell phone technology can help with weight loss. Over the course of 16 weeks, the mDIET study will use the cell phone to remind participants to make wise nutritional choices throughout the day. Participants will also be given up-to-date and effective methods for weight loss and lifestyle changes as well as a pedometer to monitor their daily activity.

“mDIET is an innovative, yet straightforward approach to getting people to monitor their diet,” says PACE project principal investigator Kevin Patrick, M.D., M.S., professor of Family and Preventive Medicine, UC San Diego School of Medicine. “We are trying to make this as pain free as possible. People won’t stick to something that’s too difficult and they’re all multi-tasking anyway. Using the cell phone may be the perfect way to get a message to busy people on the go.”

Now PACE is recruiting 60 participants.

Before the study begins, case managers will research the participant’s lifestyle, for example, assessing nearby grocery stores, finding opportunities for physical activity and possibly enlisting the support of friends or family.

Life-style coordinators will send “prompts,” text or picture messages, with specific suggestions or tips regarding diet and improving lifestyle habits. For example, near lunchtime, a participant might receive a picture message of an apple, reminding the participant to make the healthy choice: leave the candy bar, take the apple.

“It seems like everybody has a cell phone. Those who do usually carry it with them at all times,” explained mDIET coordinator Lindsay W. Dillon, M.P.H., C.H.E.S. “We want to see if we can use that same technology to get people to think differently.”

Source: University of California, San Diego

Citation: Pick Up the Cell Phone, Drop the Pounds (2007, August 13) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-08-cell-pounds.html>

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