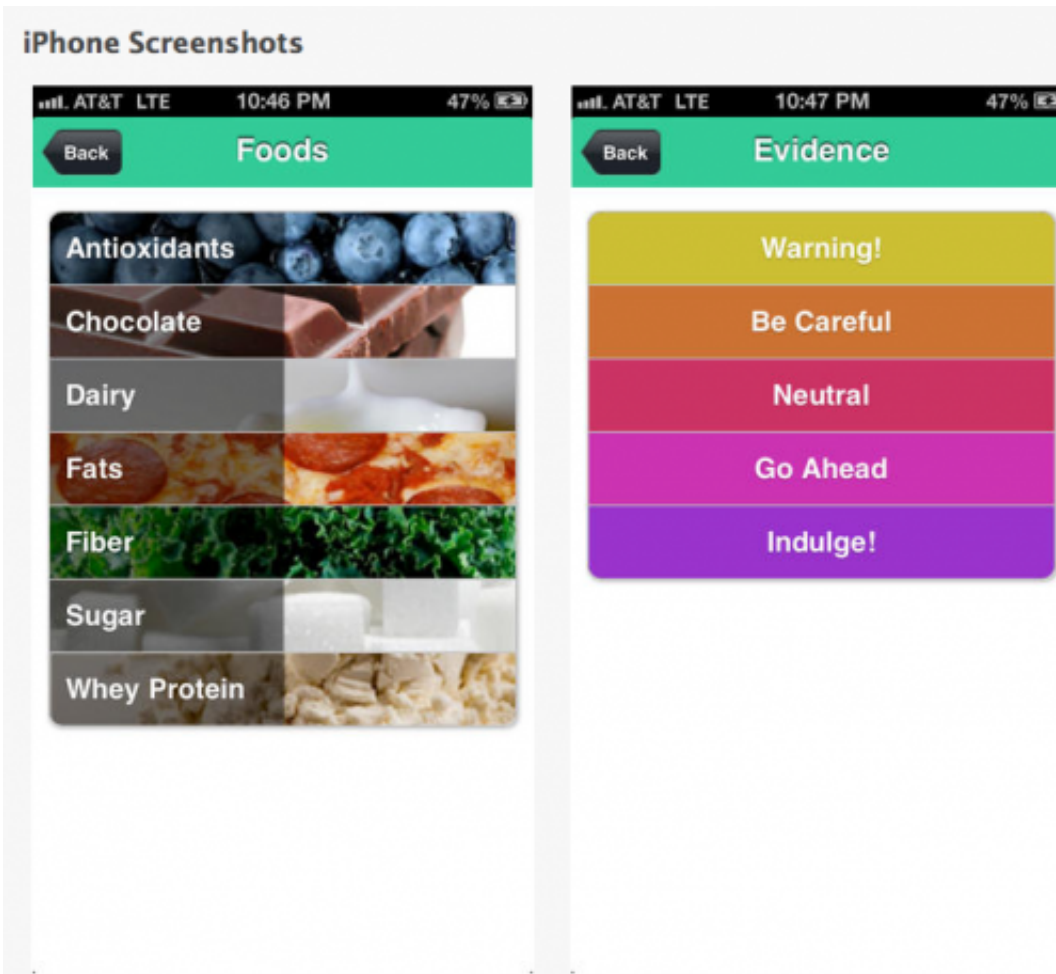


Got acne? There's an App for that

April 1 2014, by Erin White



This is an iPhone Screen Shot of diet & acne app. Credit: Northwestern University

Acne sufferers around the world are using an iPhone app created at Northwestern University to learn how certain foods affect their skin

conditions.

The [app](#), called "diet & [acne](#)," can be downloaded from the iTunes app store for free. It uses data from a systematic analysis of peer-reviewed research studies to show people if there is or is not [scientific evidence](#) linking acne to foods such as chocolate, fat, sugar and whey protein.

"Users may be surprised to learn that there is no conclusive evidence from large randomized controlled trials that have linked chocolate and acne," said Diana Cohen, M.D., creator of the app. "Although one small study found that eating 100 percent cocoa could worsen acne symptoms."

Cohen designed the app when she was a student in the Master of Science in Engineering Design and Innovation program at the Segal Design Institute at Northwestern. She is also a 2013 graduate of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and a resident physician at University of Illinois at Chicago.

Research displayed in the app shows that dairy (especially skim milk), whey protein, omega-6 fatty acids and foods high in sugar have been associated with the presence of acne. It also explains that foods rich in antioxidants and fiber have been associated with a decreased presence of acne in some studies.

Details about the use of the app were published online in the March 2014 issue of *JAMA Dermatology*.

Over a five-month period of time, starting April 1 and ending Aug. 31, 2013, the app was downloaded to 5,507 devices in 98 different countries.

Just over 100 people responded to a survey embedded in the app, and 87

percent of respondents reported having acne for a duration of more than one year, with 37 percent reporting they had not seen a physician for their acne.

These results show that well-constructed apps, based upon peer-reviewed literature, can be a highly effective method to widely disseminate medical information to a large and diverse population.

"People all over the world are turning to mobile apps as a source of information regarding health issues, but most of the apps out there are not evidence-based, and some exist to just sell a product," Cohen said. "This app is different because it uses evidence from a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature and puts it at a patient's fingertips."

Most of the people who downloaded the app found it through searches of keywords such as "acne" in the iTunes app store, but downloading such an app soon could be part of a doctor's toolkit of resources for patients, said Northwestern Medicine's Roopal Kundu, M.D.

Kundu is an associate professor in dermatology at the Feinberg School, corresponding study author and an attending physician at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

"Oil production and hormones have more of an impact on acne than diet, but I don't dismiss dietary intake when I treat patients," Kundu said. "This [app](#) is a tool I can offer patients to help them make better food choices based on scientific research."

Provided by Northwestern University

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