

How to assess the effectiveness of activity trackers for improving health

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The rise of wearable activity trackers, such as Fitbit, Fuelband, and Jawbone, has generated a lot of public excitement as well as interest from researchers who are enthused about the opportunities these devices may provide to monitor activity and help people lead healthier lives.

A new article notes that the traditional randomised trial designs used in health and medicine are not well suited to mobile health, and perhaps the "micro-randomised trial" can be a useful alternative. Micro-randomised trials are trials in which participants are randomly assigned a treatment from the set of possible treatment actions at several times throughout the day. Therefore, each participant may be randomized hundreds or thousands of times over the course of a study.

"These [trials](#) will provide evidence regarding in which real-time settings [wearable devices](#) should provide treatments to help you and me, and in which settings these treatments will only aggravate us," said Dr. Susan Murphy, senior author of the *Significance* article.

More information: Walter Dempsey et al. Randomised trials for the Fitbit generation, *Significance* (2015). [DOI: 10.1111/j.1740-9713.2015.00863.x](#)

Provided by Wiley

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