# Medical Xpress

# Swipe up! Health apps deliver real results en masse

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In a [new study](#) in *npj Digital Medicine*, researchers synthesized data from 206,873 people across 47 studies, finding that digital health tools—like mobile apps, websites, and text messages—can significantly improve

health and well-being by keeping you active, boosting steps, and improving your diet and sleep.

Specifically, electronic and mobile health interventions can help people achieve:

- 1,329 more steps / day
- 55 minutes more moderate-to-vigorous exercise / week
- 45 minutes more overall physical activity / week
- seven hours less sedentary behavior / week
- 103 fewer calories consumed / day
- 20% more fruits and vegetables consumed / day
- 5.5 grams less saturated fat consumed / day
- 1.9 kilograms of weight loss over 12 weeks
- Improved sleep quality
- Less severe insomnia.

With the global economic burden of chronic diseases estimated to exceed US $47 trillion by 2023, effective interventions are in high demand. According to the World Health Organization, one in eight people are now living with obesity; 422 million people have diabetes; and cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide.

Lead researcher, UniSA's Dr. Ben Singh, says people's health behaviors must change if we are to reduce the incidence of chronic disease.

"With the rise of preventable chronic diseases like obesity, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes, finding mechanisms that can help reduce people's risk is important," Dr. Singh says.

"Our study found that digital and mobile health interventions can have a positive effect on people's health and well-being, not only helping them to increase their physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior, but also

improving their diet and quality of sleep.

"Given the wide accessibility and popularity of health apps, their capability to tailor information and deliver timely reminders and prompts, and scalability to diverse populations, they could be a very effective intervention to promote better health.

"Making positive changes to your health and well-being can be a challenge—it's always easier to add kilos to your waistline, than it is to reduce them—but by incorporating digital tools into your everyday life, you're more likely to achieve positive outcomes."

The research identified consistent findings across different age groups, health behaviors, interventions, and health populations, indicating that digital health apps could help underpin broader public health campaigns. While researchers recommend further investigation to better understand the impacts among specific groups of people, at top line, digital health apps appear to be a win-win for all.

**More information:** Ben Singh et al, A systematic umbrella review and meta-meta-analysis of eHealth and mHealth interventions for improving lifestyle behaviours, *npj Digital Medicine* (2024). DOI: 10.1038/s41746-024-01172-y

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