

May 2019 Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

Obtaining Health Information Using Mobile apps

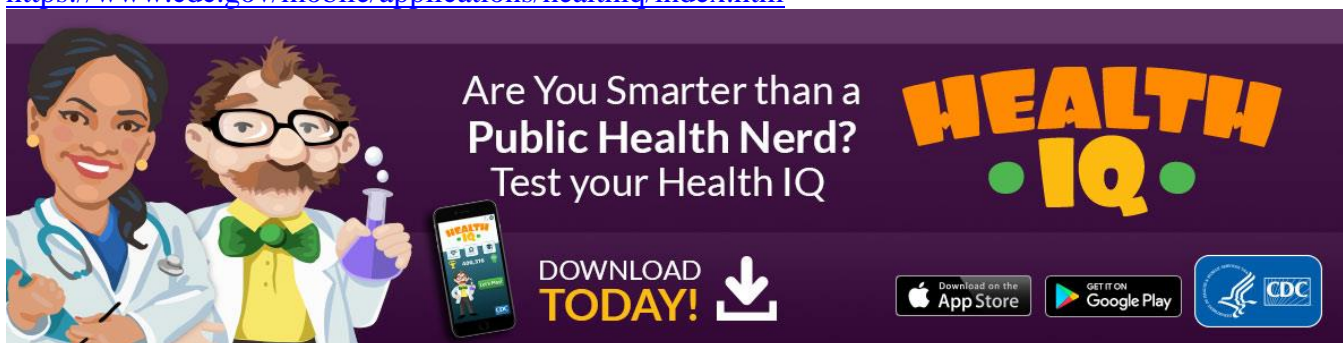
Mobile apps, software programs for cell phone and other mobile device, number in the thousands and continue to increase day by day. Percentage of users has also increased. In 2012, almost 20 percent of smartphone owners had at least one health app on their phones. In 2015, although a Pew survey found that 19% of mobile phone users had at least one health app, another survey found the rate to be significantly higher at 58.23%. Various findings suggest that younger persons and those with higher incomes and education are more likely to use a health app. Fitness and nutrition appear to be the most common categories of health apps.

With healthcare reform and more advanced data becoming available, mobile health apps will not only see a growing number of users, but studies suggest they will, for the first time, become people's preferred health resource over physicians. An [ITOnline](#) report found two-thirds of Americans have already shown a favor for digital health management. The study also showed 79 percent of Americans said they would be willing to use a wearable device to manage their health, whereas 45 percent wanted tracking of symptoms while 43 percent wanted it to manage a personal health issue or condition. A report in Forbes suggested that “women will trust their mobile health apps and communities more than their doctors.” Additionally, two-thirds of women said they would use a mobile app to manage health-related issues. As usage increases, here are some things to keep in mind when using a mobile health app:

- content of most apps isn't written or reviewed by medical experts; may be inaccurate and unsafe.
- information entered when using an app may not be secure.
- little research exists on the benefits, risks, and impact of health apps.
- not always easy to know what personal information an app will access or how it stores your data. Before downloading an app, find out if the store you get the app from says who created it.
- don't trust an app if contact or Web site information for creator isn't available.
- Note: Reasons for not downloading health apps include lack of interest, cost (and hidden cost), and concern about apps collecting personal data.

Two reliable governmental agencies health apps: U.S. National Library of Medicine and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mobile/applications/cdcgeneral/promos/cdcmobileapp.html>. Automatic updates whenever device is online and ensures the most up-to-date health news and information. CDC videos on internet: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CDCStreamingHealth/videos>

CDC's Health IQ App: Challenge your Health IQ
<https://www.cdc.gov/mobile/applications/healthiq/index.htm>



<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jenniferelias/2015/12/31/in-2016-users-will-trust-health-apps-more-than-their-doctors/#5bc429227eb6>

<https://medcitynews.com/2018/04/healthcare-apps-patients/> <https://medlineplus.gov/webeval/webeval.html>