

EXERCISE BENEFITS AND ASSESSMENTS USING ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY

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Exercise is a critical part of a healthy lifestyle. For long term fitness success, find activities you enjoy and consider it a family affair. Getting more active does not necessarily mean spending hours in the gym but small changes; taking stairs, parking farther from stores, going out for an evening stroll or throwing a Frisbee with the kids. Exercise has many benefits outside of helping with weight and include:

- Prevention of chronic disease like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Exercise helps to raise good cholesterol or HDL and lower unhealthy fats or triglycerides.
- Improved moods. Physical activity stimulates brain chemicals that reduce stress and support a feeling of wellbeing. For those of us who are stress eaters or battle depression, exercise is very important key to a healthier lifestyle.
- Improved energy and sleep. Exercise helps you to get through the day with less energy because of better delivery of oxygen to muscles and promotes better and deeper sleep states. Do avoid exercising within a couple of hours of bedtime.

What is the role of the activity tracker? It is simply another tool used to assess current fitness and activity level. Activity trackers can range from the very basic that is the pedometer which just tracks steps to very elaborate trackers that record VO2 max which is a measure of your body's ability to use oxygen. The cost of devices varies substantially from around ten dollars to a thousand dollars.

The basic features of an activity tracker usually include steps taken, stairs climbed, distance traveled, calorie calculators and sleep tracking. For those of us just getting started in fitness, these are probably adequate. The more advanced activity trackers can monitor heart rate, speed and oxygen utilization. Other trackers may be used to track multiple sports from swimming to cycling and tennis to golf. A GPS tracking device may be used in these activity trackers.

So, in combination with your goals, the activity tracker can monitor and promote fitness over time. A reasonable long term goal from the American Heart Association is 10,000 steps per day and 30 minutes of moderate activity at least 5 days per week. Check in with your doctor on your exercise goals. Finally, remember the tortoise beat the hare in the great race. Isn't it time to get started?