

Last month, I presented a health and wellness workshop at a staff in-service for a local organization. As we talked about creating a wellness plan to improve overall health, wellness, and dietary habits, one of the participants asked about using mobile applications.

Apple recently shared that their iTunes store has a total of more than 350,000 applications available for download (for purchase or free.) This doesn't account for the additional applications available through Android, Windows, Blackberry or other smartphone devices. The dramatic increase in application availability is also reflected in the area of health and wellness apps. The iTunes app store alone has nearly 20,000 health care and wellness apps. Sorting through the massive amount of options can be daunting.

The challenge comes in finding apps that are based on sound health and wellness practices. University of Missouri Extension recently published a list of apps that were reviewed by their Nutrition and Health Education Extension Specialists. Although there are many apps that could be added to the list, these trained and experienced professionals shared 6 picks as their recommended apps to get you started.

In the area of Food and Nutrition, they recommend **MyFitnessPal**. This app will track your food intake and your physical activity. It has over 3 million foods in its extensive database. You can add additional foods that are not currently in the system and save them for future use. The app has been rated highly among 9,000 readers surveyed by Consumer Reports. Ease of use was a contributing factor to its popularity. Keeping a daily food log is a research-proven advantage in losing weight.

Another app, **Cooking Matters**, can assist you in finding healthy, easy and affordable recipes. Within the app, you can identify your favorite recipes and connect with other health-conscious users via social network links. Using an app like this one can help you plan your meals in advance so that both your time and money are well-spent at the grocery store. Planning your meals for a week at a time will limit the number of times you need to make a stop for groceries.

Seasonal & Simple is an app created by University of Missouri Extension service that provides a guide to finding, selecting, storing, and preparing fresh fruits and vegetables found in Missouri. With our growing season being similar to Missouri's, this application would be of benefit to Kansans, as well. When you buy fruits and vegetables in season, you can reduce your food costs while promoting a healthier diet through fresh produce.

If you are trying to watch your blood glucose levels, **Glucose Buddy** may be an app for you. You can enter glucose numbers, carbohydrate consumption, insulin

dosages/medications, hemoglobin A1C, and activities on this app. Just as with their previously recommended apps, the Missouri Extension Specialists found Glucose Buddy easy to use and found it especially good for those who do not have advanced blood glucose meters. Keeping track of blood glucose levels is essential for managing diabetes and this tool is helpful for recording daily glucose levels.

Are you trying a new workout program for 2014? You might want to look in to the **Simple Workout Log** app. The application is just what the name indicates – a simple way to track your workouts. It is both easy to use and intuitive allowing you to enter strength training exercises, cardiovascular activity, and your weight. What is your level of physical activity? The weekly amount of activity recommended for most adults is at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate activity or 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous aerobic physical activity weekly. Moderate activity means that you are able to talk with minimal effort (but would not be able to sing) during the activity. During vigorous activity, you would not be able to speak more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

The last app recommended is **Conscious**. This app is designed to make you aware of your daily activities and to help you become more mindful. Too many times, our days seem to require us to be put on “auto pilot” and before you know it, the day becomes a blur. This app helps users become more fully present in their daily living.

If you want to explore other nutrition and health apps, here are some tips on what to look for to make sure you’re making good selections.

- 1) Identify the source of the application. Find out if the app has a website and, if so, read the “about” section to learn more about the organization or person who created the app. Make sure they have credentials and experience to support the information and tools on the app.
- 2) Make sure the app meets your needs. Are the tools included in the application broad enough for the purpose you are using it?
- 3) Is the app user-friendly and intuitive? You are more likely to use tools that have easy access and designed for the way you think or operate. These tools are supposed to make your life easier, healthier, and less stressful.
- 4) Look at the reviews. What do nutrition, health, and wellness professionals say about the app? The American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics hosts a website that provides reviews of top-rated apps. You can view the site at: <http://www.eatright.org/appreviews>

Make sure you are an informed consumer when it comes to selecting nutrition, health and wellness apps. Good health and wellness practices are key to having a long and

fulfilling life. For more information about nutrition and wellness, feel free to contact me at Geary County K-State Research and Extension - 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!