

## Fitness trackers 'poor at measuring calories burned'

28th May, 2017



A new report says fitness trackers are not so accurate in measuring the amount of calories our body burns while exercising, and that this may lead people to make poor decisions about their diet.

The study is from Stanford University in the USA. Researchers evaluated the accuracy of five popular trackers. These included the Apple Watch, Microsoft Band, Fitbit Surge and Samsung Gear S2. The researchers observed 60 volunteers as they walked, ran and cycled while wearing the devices. Researchers found that none of the devices had an error rate below 20 per cent. Dr Euan Ashley, co-author of the study, said: "People need to know that on energy expenditure, [the trackers] give rough estimates."

The Stanford scientists said users of fitness trackers should be cautious about using the devices to judge what they eat. Dr Ashley said: "If you go to the gym, and you think you've lost 400 calories, then you might feel you've got 400 calories to play with." This could be a problem for those who base what they eat on how many calories their fitness tracker said they burned. One CEO of a fitness tracker company suggested the researchers may not have adjusted the user settings properly. The CEO told the USA Today newspaper that the study method could have reported incorrect data, saying: "We think the excess error reported in energy expenditure is not representative in this study, due to this methodological error."

Sources: [bbc.com](http://bbc.com) / [usatoday.com](http://usatoday.com) / [licescience.com](http://licescience.com)

## Writing

Everyone should wear a fitness tracker and base their diet on it. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

report / fitness / calories / exercising / decisions / diet / accuracy / devices / estimates / scientists / judge / problem / settings / newspaper / data / energy / study / error

## True / False

- a) A report says fitness trackers could lead to poor decisions about diet. T / F
- b) Scientists looked at 15 different fitness trackers. T / F
- c) Researchers looked at 60 volunteers as they exercised. T / F
- d) None of the fitness trackers tested had an error rate below 20%. T / F
- e) A researcher said trackers should be used to decide how much to eat. T / F
- f) A researcher said fitness tracker data is always wrong by 400 calories. T / F
- g) A fitness tracker company CEO agreed with the research data. T / F
- h) The CEO thinks there was an error in the research method. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <b>accurate</b>  | a. careful    |
| 2. <b>amount</b>    | b. basic      |
| 3. <b>evaluated</b> | c. figures    |
| 4. <b>observed</b>  | d. assessed   |
| 5. <b>rough</b>     | e. correctly  |
| 6. <b>cautious</b>  | f. precise    |
| 7. <b>problem</b>   | g. because of |
| 8. <b>properly</b>  | h. drawback   |
| 9. <b>data</b>      | i. quantity   |
| 10. <b>due to</b>   | j. monitored  |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What digital devices do you have that help you?
- c) How much do you care about calories?
- d) Do you find digital devices easy to use?
- e) Do you believe the CEO or the researchers?
- f) What things would you like devices to measure?
- g) What do you think of the idea of fitness trackers?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. not so accurate in measuring the       | a. of five popular trackers |
| 2. lead people to make poor decisions     | b. data                     |
| 3. evaluated the accuracy                 | c. estimates                |
| 4. an error rate                          | d. about their diet         |
| 5. the trackers give rough                | e. to play with             |
| 6. be cautious about using the devices to | f. properly                 |
| 7. you've got 400 calories                | g. amount of calories       |
| 8. adjusted the user settings             | h. error                    |
| 9. incorrect                              | i. below 20 per cent        |
| 10. methodological                        | j. judge what they eat      |

## Discussion – Student B

- How do fitness trackers work?
- Would (do) you use a fitness tracker?
- What are the pros and cons of fitness trackers?
- Why do you think the fitness trackers aren't so accurate?
- What do you do to get fit?
- How healthy is your diet?
- What would make you exercise more?
- What takes up most of your energy during the week?

## Spelling

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- gmeiarsun the amount
- make poor odisensci
- researchers sedrevbo 60 volunteers
- the dceiesv had an error rate below 20 per cent
- energy udneeteirpx
- should be oausuitc
- you've lost 400 elacoisr
- tesjddau the user settings properly.
- tnieocrrc data
- not eisvtptrrneae
- cmdooaoltigleh error

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. d	4. j	5. b
6. a	7. h	8. e	9. c	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Shopping

You think shopping is the best way to get fit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these ways (and why): dancing, gardening or housework.

### Role B – Dancing

You think dancing is the best way to get fit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these ways (and why): shopping, gardening or housework.

### Role C – Gardening

You think gardening is the best way to get fit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these ways (and why): dancing, shopping or housework.

### Role D – Housework

You think housework is the best way to get fit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these ways (and why): dancing, gardening or shopping.

## Speaking – Burning calories

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways to burn calories at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| • swimming  | • shopping          |
| • dancing   | • walking           |
| • gardening | • working out       |
| • housework | • walking up stairs |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	F	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.