

Media Release

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VICHEALTH RATINGS GUIDE SHOWS WHICH HEALTH AND WELLBEING APPS WORK BEST

Physical activity apps that reward you for exercising and mindfulness apps that support users struggling with anxiety and depression are among the top rated apps in the latest VicHealth [Healthy Living Apps Guide](#).

For the second year running, VicHealth has commissioned independent researchers and experts from Deakin University to review more than 300 health and wellbeing smartphone apps and provide star ratings based on user-friendliness and potential for behaviour change.

The *2016 Healthy Living Apps Guide* comes as a new VicHealth survey reveals a significant increase in the number of people that consider health and wellbeing apps as trustworthy sources of information.

VicHealth's 2016 Community Attitudes Survey of 3113 Australians showed that overall, our trust for health and wellbeing apps increased in 2016 to 45%, up from 40% in 2015.

That's why now, more than ever, it's important to find out which health and wellbeing apps are most effective, and which best suit the user and fit with their lifestyle.

The user-friendly *VicHealth Healthy Living Apps Guide* provides an independent rating of apps that promote healthy eating, promote physical activity, reduce harm from smoking and alcohol, and improve mental wellbeing.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said mobile phone apps have enormous potential to help a wide range of people make better health choices. However until 2015, when VicHealth first began research in this area, there had been no independent, evidence-based review of the quality and effectiveness of these apps, and users should be selective about which apps they trust.

"Four out of five Australians own a smartphone and have access to thousands of apps that encourage them to eat better, move more, quit smoking, drink less alcohol and manage stress levels," Ms Rechter said.

"With so many apps to choose from, people often struggle to find one that's effective in helping them change their behaviour in a way that will help them live a healthier life.

"The overall star rating we've provided for each of these apps considers functionality (user-friendliness) and potential for behaviour change (how effective they're likely to be in helping someone adopt a healthier lifestyle) to help people navigate the thousands of health and wellbeing apps out there.

"The right app can be effective in helping people adopt healthier lifestyles, but we caution placing too much trust in these apps. It might surprise users to learn that the majority of apps have been given a behaviour change rating of 1 star or less out of five.

"We're also encouraging software companies to use our new guidelines for app developers to help them design better products. Ultimately we're trying to give people the information they need to make better decisions for their own health, in the most effective way," Ms Rechter said.

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VicHealth's Healthy Living Apps Guide for consumers, as well as the guidelines for app developers, is available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/apps.

The pages can be searched in a number of ways – by category, Apple or Android device, age group, price, and whether the app needs an add-on to work e.g., a fitness device. They can also be sorted by overall rating, name, highest price or lowest price.

For more information on the rating process, visit: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/apps-rating-process>

2016 Top ten apps by Overall Star Rating (which considers functionality and behaviour change combined)

App name	Overall star rating	Functionality star rating	Behaviour change star rating
WhatsUp? – A wellbeing app offering emotional support.	3	4	2.5
Pact – earn cash for exercise, healthy living, and eating right.	3	4.5	2
Happify – tools and programs to take control of your emotional wellbeing.	3	4	2
Pacifica – holistic tools to address anxiety, stress, and depression, based on CBT and mindfulness.	3	4	2
Remente – goal setting, personal improvement and mental training.	3	4	2
DietBet – motivation to lose weight and get fit.	3	3.5	2
Applause – weight loss motivation, tracking, articles, support and encouragement.	3	4	2
Calorie Counter & Diet Tracker by MyFitnessPal	3	4	2
FitFox – exercise rewards, activity tracker, and fitness movement coach.	3	4	1.5
Quit Now: My QuitBuddy – motivation to get and stay smoke-free.	3	4	1.5

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