Health Advice

Self-tracking

How much food ends up on your plate, how far you've walked, whether you've taken enough breaks or slept deeply enough – you can collect and analyse all this data with the help of health apps and wearables, which are measurement sensors in the form of wristbands or fitness watches. The self-tracking trend stems from the USA. Apps and tools collect a large amount of data and figures about your body and display these in colourful and illustrative graphs. These may show your eating behaviour, sleep duration and quality, breathing rate, steps, pulse or blood pressure. Many self-tracking apps also provide suggestions for improvement: if your stress level is high there are breathing exercises; if you're not getting enough sleep your smartphone sends you a reminder to go to bed; if your device notices you aren't moving enough it prompts you to stand up.

Self-tracking for extra motivation

So if you'd like to find out more about your own dietary or exercise patterns, self-tracking tools can provide fascinating insights into your own body and personal behaviour. They also include individual incentives and helpful tips for your everyday life: Do you forget to drink enough or stand up regularly while you work? No problem, the apps on your smartphone or wristbands will be happy to remind you. If you aren't very good at motivating yourself, self-tracking tools will give you a motivational boost because even the small wins are registered. If you use the same apps as colleagues, you can share your fitness achievements or nutrition plans and spur each other on to exercise more or eat more healthily during the working day.

Listen to your own body

If you only ever look at your smartphone to view and analyse figures and data about your body, however, you run the risk of relying too much on technology. It's more important that you have a feel for your own body. Don't forget to listen to your inner self. Constantly looking at the numbers can also increase the pressure in everyday life: Your pulse is high, you haven't done the recommended number of steps yet and your colleague has completed the fitness programme much faster than you? Remember that self-tracking tools are mainly there to give you ideas and are meant to be fun, not cause you stress. No matter how often you look at the displays, no app can replace your own feel for your body. Be mindful of yourself even away from the tracking tools.

Pay attention to the quality of self-tracking apps

There is a huge selection of tracking apps and devices on the market, so pay attention to the quality and reliability of the provider. It's also worth taking a look at their privacy terms, to make sure your personal data really is safe. Take particular care when using apps that measure medical data such as blood sugar, pulse and heart rate: only a doctor can determine whether the data is actually correct and what treatments you may require. The tools are not suitable for self-diagnosis and in no way replace a visit to the doctor. But it can be quite motivating to see that you've managed your weekly exercise targets, lowered your stress level or resisted a few unnecessary calories.

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BARMER