

6 reasons smartwatches can be harmful to mental health

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Smartwatches are touted as beneficial for physical health thanks to the many apps and fitness features available. But what are the implications of using a smartwatch for your mental health? Although owning a smartwatch may seem like a good idea to improve your health, the negative effects it brings are often overlooked.

Whether you are thinking of buying a smartwatch or already own one, it is important to be aware of the harmful effects of owning this device. Here are 6 ways smartwatches can negatively impact your mental health.

1. Smartwatch focuses on calories

You might be thinking, shouldn't a smartwatch for fitness purposes focus on tracking calories? But for many people, the focus or constant reminders to burn calories can have a negative impact. For those who have trouble making food choices or exercising, the Apple Watch can be frustrating because you can't turn off the calorie consumption tracking feature.

To complete **Activity** rings on Apple Watch each day, you need to complete three specific types of activities - exercise minutes, standing minutes, and calorie-burning activities. Unfortunately, these 3 criteria cannot be adjusted.

Not only can you turn off calorie tracking on the Apple Watch, but its built-in Fitness app encourages you to increase your daily calorie intake each week as you meet or exceed your 'Move' goal . With such a heavy focus on calories, smartwatches also have the potential to cause discomfort for those with or susceptible to eating disorders.

2. Smartwatch constantly reminds you to move and exercise



A common feature in all smart watches and bracelets is a reminder to stand or move after a period of sitting. Some smartwatches will also remind you to complete your daily goals if you haven't already done so.

On paper, these reminder features sound great. However, if you're in the wrong headspace, physically unwell, or struggling with an exercise addiction, persistent reminders to move throughout the day can have a negative impact. to your mental health.

Some smartwatches can remind you to move regularly throughout the day. Some will even question whether you're getting enough exercise, even if you've reached your goal for the day. It's true that some smartwatch features can help improve your mental health, but constant reminders to move can easily cause feelings of guilt and self-esteem issues, especially if these arbitrary goals are not met.

3. Smart watches constantly distract you

One of the key features that differentiates watches and smart bracelets is the range of applications, features and functions available on each type of device. While smart bracelets mainly focus on activity tracking, smartwatches can track both exercise as well as activity, acting as an assistant to mobile phones.

In some ways, owning a smartwatch means you have one more device that sends you constant notifications, which can increase anxiety as well as distract you. . As a Wockhardt Hospital psychiatrist highlighted in an article, constant notifications can cause anxiety, depression and other mental health problems. Receiving a constant barrage of information from both your smartphone and smartwatch will disrupt your focus on other tasks, which can affect your concentration levels in the long run, affecting your mental health. your relationships. Many people will not hesitate to check their devices as soon as a notification sounds, often interrupting face-to-face interactions. The damage these notifications cause to your interpersonal relationships is remarkable.

4. Smartwatches offer too many features

Remember to move every hour, burn enough calories, achieve all your goals and get enough sleep... If you don't achieve the goals your smartwatch keeps reminding you of, you may feel like a failure. , panic and low self-

esteem.

As mentioned above, you risk receiving countless notifications every day about different features of your smartwatch. Thanks to the popularity of smartwatches, there are countless apps to download and integrate into your device. However, having too many apps, especially unused apps (or too difficult to use), can cause device overload and even be dangerous for your health.

5. Smartwatches create obsession with body measurements or excessive exercise



There is a risk of becoming obsessed with exercise if you use a smartwatch regularly. Due to the 'increase your fitness goals each week' encouragement that many smartwatches offer, you may develop an unhealthy and obsessive relationship with exercise, body image and diet.

Having constant access to health data on a smartwatch can lead to obsessing over the numbers you see, instead of adjusting to your body's needs. Since accomplishing goals can give you a rush of dopamine, it's not hard to see how easy it is to become obsessed with achieving or exceeding your physical goals at the expense of your health. his spirit.

6. Smart watches have the potential to cause addiction

Due to the gamified nature of achieving goals on smartwatches (getting badges and engaging animations every time a goal is achieved), it's easy to get addicted to using this wearable device. It can be a toxic combination of getting dopamine every time you get positive feedback when you reach your goal with the fear of missing your goal every day if you don't constantly check in with your smartwatch. me.

Panic can also set in if your smartwatch isn't tracking your activity or workout progress accurately. The unfortunate truth is that many designers of hardware or diet and fitness apps do not take mental health into account. In a study published in BJPsych Open, participants reported eight negative consequences of using fitness apps:

1. The numbers are too rigid
2. Rigid diet
3. Haunting
4. Depends on the application
5. Too much emphasis on achievements
6. Brings extremely negative emotions
7. Motivation from 'negative' messages
8. Create too much competition

If you're worried about your smartwatch addiction, read our advice on how to overcome the negative habit of device addiction.

If you're having trouble, give your smartwatch a break.

When used safely, smartwatches can bring many benefits to your life. However, with a prominent focus on exercise, activity and calorie burning, smartwatches can have a negative impact on your mental health. If you don't see the tracking results you want, you may suffer from low self-esteem.

If you're feeling tired of your smartwatch, it might be time to take a break from it. Start by turning off notifications, taking off your smartwatch during social hours, or reducing your activity goals. If you still find yourself negatively affected by your smartwatch, you should take a break from wearing it.

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