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## Put the Donut Down! (There is an App for That)

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) — Do you remember when phones were just phones? These days, smartphones are computers residing in our pockets teeming with music, photos, books, movies and weather reports.

“Information and tasks are packaged in small apps, little bits of software designed to execute a specific function. There is a veritable smorgasbord of health-related apps available for all types of smartphone users including iPhone, Android and others. Predictably, quality runs the gamut; however, there are some terrific free or inexpensive apps out there to help patients have a healthier lifestyle,” explained Victoria Rentel, M.D., a family physician in Columbus, Ohio.

“For most patients it is not binging that expands the waistline—it is a cookie here, a slice of pizza there or a mocha in the middle of a busy morning. That 100-200 extra calories a day morphs into a pound or two a month for approximately 12-15 pounds a year,” said Rentel.

To help combat those extra pounds and feel better about the upcoming holiday months, look into some calorie counting apps available on smartphones recommended by Rentel including Livestrong, Loseit and Sparkpeople. While the user interface may vary, they each operate the same way. The user simply supplies starting height and weight, a goal weight, and desired rate of loss and foods eaten throughout the day and are then recorded in the application.

In addition, beyond just keeping track of simple calories like a food diary, these apps and others like them can report composition of diet in terms of fats, protein and carbs; keep track of calories over or under daily or weekly targets; and sync online and/or over other devices, such as an iPad, in real time.

Rentel suggests that even if you are not interested in or capable of noting every calorie every day, even recording information for a few meals or days can call attention to portion pitfalls and perils in your daily food routine.

If you are without a smartphone, you can still get in on the action. Loseit, SparkPeople and Livestrong have Web sites with simple-to-use calorie tracking interfaces. Even the most rudimentary cellphones generally have a timer or stopwatch to help individuals track and get credit for exercise.

“So, where do you start? Pick up your smartphone and download a few apps. Take the apps out for a test drive. Find an interface you like and start prescribing. Will it work for every patient? Of course, not. Not everybody is ready, but you never know where an app will lead. Perhaps, someday across the finish line,” added Rentel.

*\*Source: Victoria Rentel, M.D.*

*The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,100 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.*