



The Pros and Cons of Mental Health Apps

Mental health apps offer a wide range of benefits for consumers and clinicians. In addition to the convenience of 24/7 accessibility, apps can offer engaging ways to deliver different types of therapy, track symptoms, help users manage medications, and teach coping skills. Some apps are stand-alone programs that address specific disorders. Others help the user to connect to peer counselors or mental health professionals.

However, while there are thousands of mobile apps available in iTunes and Android app stores that address mental health issues, there is little industry regulation and currently no national standards for evaluating effectiveness. The [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#) cautions that while the technology has great potential, not all apps are trustworthy. Personal information entered by the user may not be secure, and it is not always easy to determine how data will be stored. In addition, information provided by the app may not be accurate.

What to Look For in an App

NIMH does not endorse any specific mental health app, but offers these suggestions for finding one:

- Ask a mental health care provider for a recommendation.
- Check if the app employs an evidence-based treatment. For instance, research shows that Internet-based cognitive-behavioral therapy, or CBT, is as effective as conventional CBT for disorders such as depression, anxiety, social phobia, and panic disorder.
- Determine if you want an app that offers opportunities to interact with a trained mental health professional. Does the app offer suggestions on what to do if there is a psychiatric emergency?
- Is the app easy to use and does it hold your attention? Since many apps are free or at low cost, it's wise to test them for a few days to see if you want to continue using it.
- Look for any information on the app developer's credentials and experience. Two sites that offer information on mental health and healthcare apps include [Ranked](#) and [Psyberguide](#), which provide information on the scientific research behind the app, a rating scale of the overall experience the app provides, and its privacy policy.



Interested in joining a study on mental health apps? [Clinical trials](#) on a variety of applications are underway.

interested in addiction recovery services, primary care, or mental health care for children or adults, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.

