



Fitness watches can be a motivating and helpful tool, but without boundaries they can be harmful to mental health. Let's dive into some of the pros and cons of using a fitness watch, to help you determine whether a fitness watch is right for you in meeting your fitness goals!

CONS

- Studies have shown that the margin of error for measuring energy expenditure (calories burned) is 27% on the most accurate device, and up to 93% on the least accurate device.
- The margin of error for steps taken averages 20%, which means you could have walked 12,000 steps when your watch says you walked 10,000.
- Fitness watches can cultivate an unhealthy fixation with physical activity. Some watches admonish users for falling short of daily activity goals.

PROS

- Some fitness watches have a navigation function, which is a helpful tool when running, biking, or walking outdoors.
- The fitness watch can be a useful tool in measuring heart rate, with a margin of error of about 5%. Although sub-par to the chest-worn monitor, this is fairly accurate for recreational use.
- There are a few watches on the market that have a blood sugar tracking function, which could be extremely useful for active (and non-active) people living with diabetes. The watch could make it easier to be alerted when blood sugar levels need correcting.

In summary, fitness watches as a wearable technology offer many convenient benefits for certain populations. It is important, however, to recognize that several factors can affect the accuracy of these devices.

If you use a fitness watch, take into consideration your health history and fitness goals. If you are someone who has a history of disordered eating or overexercising, a fitness watch may negatively impact your mental health. If your watch leaves you feeling more discouraged than encouraged, this is your sign to ditch it! Talk to your strength and conditioning coach or registered dietitian about alternative ways to monitor your fitness progress.