



Dietitians offer guidance on apps

Everyone I know seems to have a different nutrition app on their smart phone. Where can I find information about whether an app is a good one?

With thousands of nutrition- and food-related apps available, it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

It helps to narrow down what you're looking for: Do you want something to help you plan healthy meals, or are you more interested in tracking calories, managing blood sugar or finding restaurants that serve gluten-free food?

Once you have narrowed down what kind of information you're looking for specifically, talk more to your friends about the apps they use and what they like or don't like about them. If they say they like their app but that it's "clunky" or otherwise cumbersome, search around for other options that offer the same type of information, and test them yourself.

As for making sure the food- or nutrition-related content is accurate, nothing beats guidance from a registered dietitian. If your health plan offers dietetic services or nutrition coaching, it might not be a bad idea to sign up for a session or two and, during your consult, inquire about recommended apps.

If that seems a bit much, you can take a look online at apps reviewed by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics — the professional

organization for registered dietitians.

Academy dietitians started reviewing apps in late 2011, and their initial offerings, grouped under the categories of "Diabetes," "Gluten-Free" and "Weight Management," are online at the organization's website, <http://www.eatright.org/appreviews/>. These apps, all available to download free and primarily geared for the iPhone, are listed in alphabetical order under each category. You can scan the initial listing relatively quickly to see how well each app rates on the academy's 1- to 5-star scale, and then click on an app to get more information.

Since that time, the academy has continued to review apps and list the reviews on its Food and Nutrition magazine website, <http://www.foodandnutrition.org/Nutrition-Apps/>. Each review details the app's pros and cons as well as the dietitian's star-rating and "bottom line." The apps are listed in reverse-chronological order — that is, the most recently reviewed apps are at the top. There's no search function, but it's relatively easy to page through the 62 apps currently listed and click on reviews you're most interested in reading.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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