

Are Wearables Dangerous for Health?



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It's been repeatedly stressed by healthcare practitioners how beyond a balanced diet and exercise, getting sufficient sleep is vital to our health and wellbeing.

There are wearables that can already track our daily activities such as heart rate when we exercise and even the number of steps we have walked that day and the distance. In addition to that, some wearables can monitor your sleep patterns.

But how accurate are they and are they good for you?

Sleep specialists at Rush University Lab in Chicago reported an increase in patients who were complaining about sleep disorders. However, it was observed that those who wore wearables that tracked their sleep started to develop an obsession over getting enough sleep.

As most people are aware, eight hours is what is commonly referred to as the "right amount of sleep." And because of this, people who tracked that they were getting less than that started to develop anxiety over not getting enough sleep, and the strain resulted in disrupted sleep.

Furthermore, sleep trackers cannot differentiate between light and day and could be tracking the wearer as asleep when they are in fact just resting. Ultimately, it has been observed that sleep trackers aren't always accurate.

Remember that sleep trackers like other activity trackers are wearable digital devices that measure, amongst other things, your arm movement with a detector called an accelerometer. So it is entirely possible that the sleep tracker is indicating you are asleep when you are in fact, not.

If you are struggling with a sleeping disorder such as insomnia, a sleep tracker will only tell you how much sleep you didn't get and is not sensitive or sophisticated enough to diagnose the problem. Ultimately, it may keep people from seeking the medical attention they need to fully diagnose if they have a sleeping disorder that may be detrimental to their overall health.

Furthermore, those who are tracking that they are getting a full eight hours of sleep may be misled that they have no sleep disorder, when in fact, they do. Their tracker may indicate they slept for eight hours, but it will not always accurately track if they were restless or had brief moments of awakening.

The bottom line is that too many people may be relying too much on the numbers that their wearables are recording and not on the actual quality of their sleep. Are they waking up refreshed and feeling restored? Are they energised or did they wake up more tired than before they slept because their sleep was restless and disruptive?

Zoom On

What is your top management tip?

Be true to yourself and always put values before interests.

What would you single out as a career highlight?

Becoming a Global Top 100 Digital Health Influencer is certainly one of my greatest achievements.

If you had not chosen this career path you would have become a...?

A professional sportsman.

What are your personal interests outside of work?

Sports, fitness, travelling, new cultures and food.

Your favourite quote?

It's never too late.

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