

First walking app of its kind launched to help adults be more physically active

24 August 2017, by Amy Huxtable

A free app created in collaboration with engineers from the University of Sheffield has been launched today (24 August 2017) by Public Health England to encourage adults to be more physically active.

The Active 10 app is the first of its kind and measures how much brisk walking you are doing throughout the day and highlights how many continuous chunks of 10 minutes – known as Active 10s you achieve.

The app encourages people to do at least one Active 10 a day, and users can set their own goals as they build towards meeting the 150 minutes a week of [moderate exercise](#), as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer.

Developed in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine (NCSEM), the app monitors the speed of walking and – crucially – shows you when a person has walked briskly enough to reap the health benefits.

Regular brisk walking over time can help to reduce the risk of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke and can also improve mental [health](#). After a soft launch in March, the app has already been downloaded by over 50,000 people.

The app aims to address inactivity, which contributes to one in six deaths in the UK 4 and is costing the NHS over £0.9 billion per year. New PHE evidence shows that doing at least one brisk ten minute walk a day reduces the risk of early death by 15%. Getting enough [physical activity](#) 2 each week can also lower the risk of type 2 diabetes (by 40%), cardiovascular disease (by 35%), dementia (by 30%) and some cancers (by 20%).

To stay healthy, the Chief Medical Officer advises adults aged 19-64 to do 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous [exercise](#) each week. This should

consist of a mix of aerobic [activity](#) such as cycling or fast walking, and strengthening exercises on at least two days a week.

Professor Fabio Ciravegna, Lead developer and tracking technology designer, Department of Computer Science at the University of Sheffield said: "Most similar apps on the market are designed to support exercise. Many of us are not used to exercise and are put off.

"Active 10 is designed to add ten minutes of healthy walking into our normal daily activities, like shopping or commuting. We hope it will help inspire lots of adults to up their pace for at least ten minutes a day. The technical challenge for us when developing the app was to create a solution able to work on a wide range of phones and to capture different types of walking patterns."

Rob Copeland, Professor of Physical Activity and Health at Sheffield Hallam University and Director of NCSEM Sheffield, said: "The [free app](#) combines walking intensity and time, rather than just distance or steps and is the first free app to do so. It's simple to use and incorporates behaviour change principles to help make brisk walking a daily habit.

"It also helps people gradually introduce more activity into their routine with goal setting advice and motivational tips, and it is great to see that 50,000 people have already downloaded it."

The Active 10 app has been endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). GPs across the country are recommending it to their own patients as a tool to help them manage existing conditions and prevent the [negative health impact](#) of inactivity. Search 'Active 10' to download the free app which shows how much brisk walking you are currently doing and provides tips and encouragement on how to fit ten minute bursts of [brisk walking](#) into your daily routine.

Sheila Mitchell, Marketing Director at Public Health England, said: "The Active 10 app differentiates itself from other walking products on the market by focusing on intensity and time. It has been designed for, and tested with, those who are doing very little, or no physical activity at all, and who are unfamiliar with many of the fitness apps on the market. It is perfect for the people we're trying to support, who are not able to fit high levels of exercise into their busy lives, and may be resistant to apps that push you to achieve too much too soon."

Provided by University of Sheffield

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