

Abstract Title

What do teens want and not want in a health app?

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Abstract

Introduction: The Childhood Obesity Foundation identified a gap in the availability of youth lifestyle apps that blend best evidence and best practices.

Objective To help with the development of a gamified mobile app to support youth and their families to adopt healthy behaviours, this study sought to understand what teens want in an app.

Methods A total of 15 youth (13-17 years; 10 males and 5 females) participated in a 135 minute focus group and/or two-60 minute prototype and content testing interviews. In the focus group, teens were asked to provide insights and opinions about what they wanted in a health app, what they valued, and how to make an app appealing to them. In the interviews, they tested a prototype of the app for usability and relatability of the content.

Results The qualitative analyses revealed that two main issues affected teens' interests in using an app: 1) competing priorities and interests such as devoting time to school, homework/studying, spending time with friends/family, or using games; and 2) being pre-occupied with other issues such as their personal relationships and their future. About half of the focus group participants would be interested in using a health app. They were not asked if they were currently using a health app. Qualitative analyses from both the focus group and prototype testing interviews suggested that teens are looking for clear, friendly, positive and relatable health content presented in a unique 'non-school like' format. They were less interested in working on an app alongside their parents. They seemed to value the safety of a private social wall to share experiences with their peers.

Conclusions Teens do not seem to be interested in accessing content that is similar to what they access for school.

Significance to field of dietetics These results may be useful to practitioners recommending or developing e-health interventions targeted to youth.