

HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Smartphones, Fitbits and health and wellness apps have all changed the way we train and even meditate. What's next on the digital horizon for health and wellness?

While we might think of health and wellness as a physical arena, somewhere we escape to from the

sedentary poisoning of a life lived looking at screens, the truth is that many of us are using digital tools to get the most out of our exercise and relaxation regimes.

The relationship between technology and health and wellness is not entirely new. Exercise, in particular, is a measurable activity. We can time how far we run in a set amount of time; our heart rate; how many steps we take; what we eat; and much more. Think about how the humble stopwatch would've changed the way runners approached their sport.

According to the [TimingSense](#) website, the first race events to be timed were horse races in the UK in the 1750s, while human athletics events first began to be timed in 1850 at Oxford University. Even if we're not competing with others, many of us like to compete with ourselves. We like to get the most out of our exertions and physical endeavours.

Peter Drucker famously said, "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." Drucker was speaking about business processes, but the maxim has become just as applicable to health and wellness pursuits. It's the thinking at the heart of the 'quantified self' movement that has arisen over the past decade or so, which seeks to monitor, measure and improve all aspects of our lives, but especially our physical beings.

[Journalist Gary Wolf has chronicled the Quantified Self movement](#) and he says it's not only about changing your physical self, but also about changing how you think about yourself, your self-perception.

"We know that new tools are changing our sense of self in the world. These tiny sensors that gather data in nature, the ubiquitous computing that allows that data to be understood and used, and of course the social networks that allow people to collaborate and contribute," he explained in a [TED Talk](#) on the topic.

"But we think of these tools as pointing outward, as windows, and I'd just like to invite you to think of them as also turning inward and becoming mirrors. So that when we think about using them to get some systematic improvement, we also think about how they can be useful for self-improvement, for self-discovery, self-awareness, self-knowledge."

The Quantified Self movement is barely ten years old. As biometrics collides with artificial intelligence and machine learning, we're going to see even more innovations and advances in how we think about health and wellness. The Fitbit of today will seem as old-fashioned as a stopwatch. Once we factor in developments in areas like nanotechnology and the health sciences, we will be at a new frontier for how we approach health and wellness.

As Baby Boomers continue to search for the fountain of youth, or at the very least, a more satisfying path to getting older, expect to see more venture capital pour into technology that will help us better measure our activities and improve both our physical and mental health.