

FACT SHEET

AP05

UNDERSTANDING APPLICATIONS

An app is a self-contained program or piece of software. Apps can be downloaded onto smart devices (e.g. phones, tablets, televisions, computers or other electronic devices). There is a large range of apps available some of which are capable of providing assistive technology functions. Some apps require additional devices to complete functions such as recording health data or controlling the environment.

Applications can complete the following functions or a combination of functions:

Function	Description
 Inform	Provide information in a variety of forms (text, photo, video). A range of apps allows users to store and retrieve documents, photos and videos.
 Instruct	Provide instructions to the user. These apps use the visual display and speaker functions to step people through a range of activities e.g. yoga poses.
 Record	Capture user-entered data. These apps capture text, video, photographic, movement, altitude and location data using built in sensors in the smart devices.
 Display	Visually present user-entered data entered manually or via an internal or external monitoring device. Some apps allow exportation of user-entered data into a printable format.
 Remind/Alert	Provide reminders to the user. This may be via sound, text, voice, vibration and/ or light notification to signify events or tasks.
 Guide	Provide guidance based on user-entered information, or recommended future action. Voice, photo, or video situation-specific information required by the user can be presented.
 Communicate	Allow communication and interaction with health care providers, patients, friends, family, and/ or social networks. This may be via text/email, forums, two way voice/video call e.g. Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Skype, Zoom.

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What types of apps are available?

- ➔ **Utilities:** Calculators, note pads
- ➔ **Navigation:** Providing direction
- ➔ **Entertainment:** Video, Reading, Games, News
- ➔ **Productivity:** Prompting, Scheduling, Reminding, Timers
- ➔ **Communication:** Providing a symbol system to assist a person to communicate
- ➔ **Sense Augmentation:** Assistance for people with hearing or vision impairment
- ➔ **Control/Monitoring:** Used to schedule or control external device function
- ➔ **Safety/ Location Tracking:** Allow someone to call for assistance when required or locate the phone user
- ➔ **Medication:** Assist with reminding to assist with medication compliance
- ➔ **Care Management:** Used to organise and record someone's care needs
- ➔ **Education:** Assist with teaching or learning materials
- ➔ **Health:** Used for medical or wellness purposes as explained in the column to the right.

How can I assess the suitability of an app?



Accessibility

Ability of the app to be accessible for a person in terms of ease of use e.g. switch accessibility, text size, font style, text colour, background colour/ contrast, voice output, platform used.



Functionality

The ability of the app to meet the needs of the specific user. Users frequently require apps which can complete multiple functions e.g. (recording, displaying and reminding).



Information

The quality, format of display, and if the collection and calculations used are evidence based.

Wellness Vs Medical Health Apps

There is a large volume of wellness and medical apps available. The line that distinguishes wellness from medical apps is at times unclear.

Wellness Health Apps

are those which promote awareness and encourage healthy behaviour. These are apps such as pedometers or sleep trackers.

Consumer wellness apps are largely intended to be behavior changing devices. Whilst these may not provide high accuracy, they can successfully engage consumers and motivate them to improve their health behaviour.

Medical Health Apps

are those with the intended use (alone or connected with a device) of diagnosing, preventing, monitoring, treating or alleviating an injury, disability or disease. These apps provide a solution for self-management or augment medical care, and require Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approval as 'medical devices'. These include vital signs and chronic condition management apps.

For more information: www.tga.gov.au
or to search the register: www.ebs.tga.gov.au

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