Participant Information Statement

Research study: Impact of a six-week Personal Walking Plan and comparing its effectiveness through use of wearable devices

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1. What is this study about?

We are conducting a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Heart Foundation's Personal Walking Plans (PWPs) in helping people in Australia increase their physical activity levels over a six-week period, aligning with national physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines. The study aims to assess the impact of wearable technology on program adherence and activity tracking, comparing data to self-reported measures. The findings will guide improvements to the PWPs, ensuring they are more effective and evidence-based, while laying the groundwork for future research through a potential randomised controlled trial. Taking part in this study is voluntary.

Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

2. Who is running this study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers in our research team:

- Dr. Matthew Ahmadi, Senior Research Fellow, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney
- Professor Emmanuel Stamatakis, Professor of physical activity, lifestyle, and population health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney
- Dr Nicholas Koemel, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney
- Dr. Raaj Kishore Biswas, Statistician, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney
- Ms. Kristina Atsiaris, Research Assistant, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney
- Mr. Tze Rui, Research Assistant, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney

- Ms. Iris Chen, Research Administration Officer, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney

This study is being jointly funded by the National Heart Foundation and the Mackenzie Wearable Research Hub.

3. Who can take part in the study?

We are seeking generally healthy adults aged 18 to 70 who do not have any injuries or health conditions or recent major surgery that would limit the ability to walk or do any types of physical activity. To ensure participants can fully engage with the study, they must be able and willing to use smartphone apps and wearable technology (e.g., Fitbits or similar devices). Individuals allocated to the highest-difficulty walking plan are excluded from this study to focus on participants who may benefit from support to reach the minimum physical activity recommendations in Australia.

You have been invited to take part in this study because you expressed interest in the National Heart Foundation's Personal Walking Plans (PWPs) and meet the eligibility criteria. Your contact details were collected through the Heart Foundation's website, where you were informed about this research opportunity.

4. What will the study involve for me?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete several activities over a total of approximately eight weeks. The study is separated into three (3) stages.

Stage 1: You will complete a short online study survey which will ask for your demographic information (e.g., date of birth, sex, ethnic background, postcode, household income range, number of dependents, and highest education level). Then you will receive a research-grade wearable by mail to wear for one (1) week and a paper survey to complete.

Stage 2: At this point you will be directed to sign up to start your six-week Heart Foundation Personal Walking Plan. You will need to complete similar questions to the study survey including using the same email address. You will follow the plan which includes a walking and strength program based on your starting physical activity levels. You will receive helpful resources, motivational emails and if you opted in, supportive SMS messages. During weeks 3 to 4 of your 6-week Personal Walking Plan, you'll receive a research-grade wearable device by mail to wear for one (1) week and paper survey to complete.

At the start of Stage 2 you will be randomly assigned to one of three study groups:

- Group 1: No consumer-grade wearable (e.g., Fitbit)
- Group 2: Use your own consumer-grade wearable for those who currently own a wearable

- Group 3: A consumer-grade wearable loaned to you by the research team

Stage 3: At the end of your 6-week Personal Walking Plan, you will receive a research-grade wearable by mail to wear for one (1) week and paper survey to complete.

The study will collect data on your physical activity levels from both the research-grade wearable device (This device does not have a screen or provide feedback) and your paper surveys. No personal medical records, photographs, or audio/video recordings will be collected. The total time commitment for participation will involve completing study surveys, and wearing the devices as instructed. This is in addition to following the Personal Walking Plan that you will sign up in stage two of the study. Most activities can be completed from home at your convenience.

5. Can I withdraw once I have started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part.

Your decision will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at The University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind, you can withdraw at any point in time by emailing one of our team members at: **ilpa.studies@sydney.edu.au**.

If you withdraw, no further data will be collected from you. You may also request that any data you have already provided not be included in the study. We will honour this request unless your data has already been de-identified and incorporated into aggregated results, which occurs approximately two weeks after data submission.

Baseline & Self-reported Surveys

By submitting your survey, you consent to take part in the study. You can withdraw at any time, including after submission, and request that your data not be used, provided it has not yet been de-identified (this occurs approximately two weeks after survey submission).

6. Are there any risks or costs?

The risks of participating in this study are minimal: During the Personal Walking Plan, you might:

- Experience temporary discomfort
- Notice a brief increase in heart rate

These feelings are normal and should pass quickly, as the programs are designed to gradually increase in difficulty with self-determined goals and rest days to avoid overuse injuries. Although we expect only minimal discomfort (e.g. brief increase in heart rate), if you do experience chest pain or tightness, dizziness or light-headedness, or excessive shortness of breath, you should stop the activity immediately and notify the research staff. If symptoms do not resolve quickly or are severe you should call emergency services (000). For non-urgent

medical advice, you may contact Healthdirect on 1800 022 222 or contact your regular General Practitioner.

The wrist devices we use are like regular fitness watches and are comfortable to wear.

You will be free to stop or discontinue the study or any study activities at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

7. Are there any benefits?

By participating in this study, you will receive a Personal Walking Plan that supports your fitness goals and provides health benefits. Your involvement will also contribute to research aimed at improving physical activity interventions for the broader community. For completing the study, you will be reimbursed $100 for your time.

8. What will happen to information that is collected?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting information from or about you for the purposes of this study.

Any identifiable information you provide us will be stored securely and will only be disclosed with your permission unless we are required by law to release information.

All data collected will be used for analysis purposes only. Your data may be published in peer-reviewed journals following the completion of the study, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications. The research team will have access to the de-identified data, and any information shared will be done so in a way that ensures your anonymity. The results will also inform the development of public health messaging related to the National Heart Foundation PWP. Additionally, these findings will contribute to modifications of the existing PWP and guide the design of future randomised controlled trials. The National Heart Foundation will provide a final report on the study's findings, which will include a feasibility evaluation, statistical analyses, and recommendations for improving study methods.

Source Data and Data Capture Methods

Data will be captured using a variety of approaches at different stages of the study. This includes study surveys and wearable devices.

Participant Characteristics

We will gather your information via surveys, which will include details such as age, sex, household income, postal code, education, and physical activity (questions derived from the GPAQ), goal setting, and levels of engagement with the PWP program.

Device-Based Measurements

Research grade wearable devices will be issued to you at three time-points to measure physical activity levels. We will provide you with a consumer-grade wearable device if you do not have a consumer-grade wearable of your own upon signing up.

We will not track GPS data or people's locations. The device is water-resistant, lightweight, and small, minimising the burden on the participants. Full instructions will be provided before the intervention on how the devices work and how you should use them. Quantitative data recorded on device software will be exported for analysis.

Data Storage
Data management plan has been developed, and a secure dedicated University of Sydney share drive has been created solely for this study and related documents. Physical data collected including participant information will be stored in a dedicated storage space safeguarded by lock and key. Data will be backed up on the University of Sydney server daily and the data will also be backed up on a physical hard drive once a week to ensure data is not inadvertently deleted or destroyed.

Record Retention
All data including hard copy and electronic copies will be retained for a 7-year data retention period. After this period, all data and related information from this study will be destroyed.

For more details about how your information will be handled please see the University's privacy webpage.

Sharing research data is important for advancing knowledge and innovation. A de-identified set of the data collected in this study may be made available for use in future research.

9. Will I be told the results of the study?

You have the right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study at its conclusion. This feedback will be in the form of a one-page summary, outlining the main findings of the study. You can consent to receiving this feedback by indicating your preference in the consent form and providing your contact information. Alternatively, you can inform a researcher at any point during the study and provide your details to receive the summary at the end of the study.

10. What if I would like more information?

When you have read this information, the following researcher(s) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have:

- Members of the research team are available at: **ilpa.studies@sydney.edu.au** or Phone: **+61 2 9351 9953**

11. What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of The University of Sydney [ethics reference: 2025/HE000054] according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the University:

Human Ethics Manager
human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
+61 2 8627 8176

This information sheet is for you to keep