

# From Step Tracker to Health Companion

**6 Ways Fitbit Empowers  
Health & Wellbeing**





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# From step tracker to a body's best friend



Fitbit has come a long way from just tracking steps. Today, people use these devices to build healthy habits and improve management of life-long health conditions like hypertension and diabetes.

As technology continues to advance, more and more people rely on Fitbit devices to unlock the data and support they need to develop and sustain healthy habits.

The timing couldn't be better; in the wake of the pandemic, everyone is feeling the impact of stress, fatigue, and unhealthy habits:

**46%**

report decreased physical exercise since the start of the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

**61%**

report undesired weight changes — whether gain or loss.<sup>2</sup>

**23%**

report drinking more alcohol to cope with their stress.<sup>3</sup>

**67%**

report they have been sleeping more or less than desired.<sup>4</sup>





# The Experts

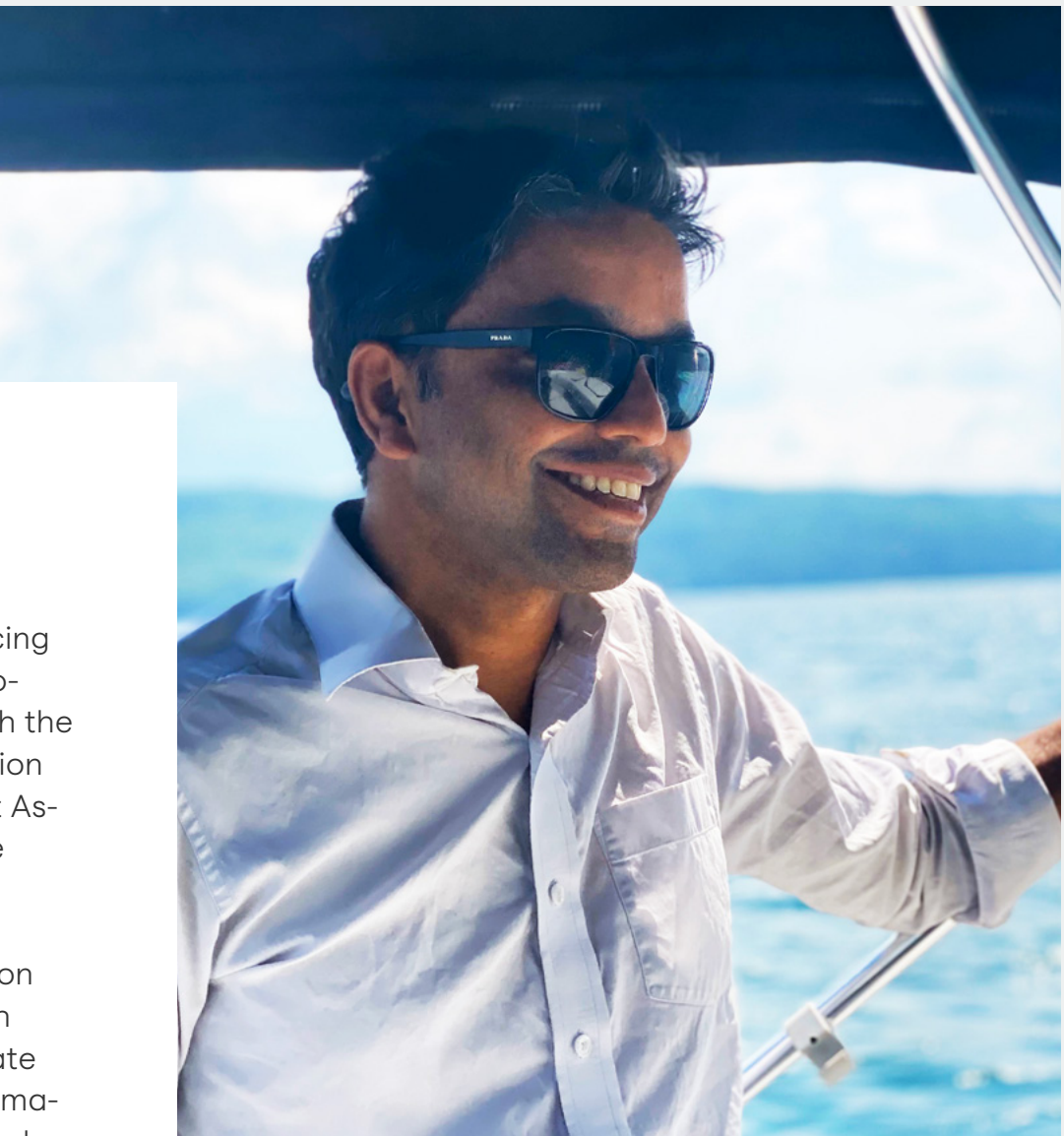
For this ebook, we spoke  
with Dr. John Moore and  
Dr. Kapil Parakh from  
Fitbit | Google for their  
insights into:

- How the Fitbit experience helps users connect the dots between their everyday behaviors and overall health
- Key wellbeing behaviors that Fitbit can help people improve
- How to incorporate Fitbit into health and wellness initiatives



**John Moore**  
**MD, PhD,**  
Medical Director,  
Fitbit

John Moore is a biomedical engineer, physician, and health behavior change scientist. He is passionate about inspiring and empowering people to optimize their health and wellbeing by improving their activity, nutrition, sleep, and mindfulness behaviors.



**Kapil Parakh**  
**MD, MPH, PhD,**  
Medical Lead, Fitbit

Kapil Parakh is a practicing cardiologist who has pioneered partnerships with the World Health Organization and the American Heart Association to incorporate their scientific recommendations into products. Kapil worked on Google search to launch products that disseminate high-quality health information to over a billion people.



# 1. Activity Tracking

2. Nutrition

3. Sleep

4. Stress Management

5. Behavior Change

6. Health Event Detection





# Let's get physical



One of the first and still most popular uses of Fitbit devices is activity tracking.

The first iterations of Fitbit tracked steps, inspiring and empowering users to reach their target step goals each day with a simple glance at the wrist.

Over time, Fitbit devices have evolved to track the degree of physical exertion across any type of physical activity, creating a more holistic view of the wearer's activity level.



Before Fitbit, tracking activity was complex and unengaging. You’d have to use a pedometer to measure steps, then write this information down in a notebook or a spreadsheet to keep track of the information.

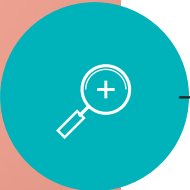
Because movement is one of the most important aspects of health, the early iterations of Fitbit focused on making activity tracking as easy as possible. This enabled people to easily measure and change their

activity behavior to help accomplish their wellness goals. Studies have found that adding Fitbit to interventions results in a statistically significant increase in movement, along with a significant decrease in weight.



# The Wearables Revolution

“Fitbit’s contribution was to make activity tracking fun and inspiring by helping you set goals, maintain streaks, and challenge your friends.”



—DR. MOORE



Fitbit devices now make it simple to not only track steps, but all movement. Fitbit's new Active Zone Minutes feature helps users reach recommended levels of physical activity—at least 150 minutes of moderate activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week<sup>6</sup>—more efficiently using heart rate.

# Stepping it up



Recommended  
levels of physical  
activity:

**150 mins  
per week  
moderate  
activity**

or

**75 mins  
per week  
of vigorous  
activity<sup>6</sup>**





“As you can imagine, it can be difficult for someone to guess what is a moderate activity vs. vigorous activity, or how to add them up to make sure you’re getting the right amount of each.”

“With Fitbit’s Active Zone Minutes (AZM), it takes all the complexity and math out of it. It doesn’t matter if you did vigorous or moderate activity, or if you decided to swim, garden, take a brisk walk, or any other activity. It really just takes the nuances out of it and makes it simple, achievable, and honestly, more fun.”



—DR. PARAKH



In addition to helping users reach weekly physical activity goals, Fitbit devices remind people to just move throughout the day.

These on-wrist reminders help people avoid being sedentary for too long, and provide motivation by showing how close the users are to reaching a daily or even hourly goal.







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While tremendously important, physical activity is just one aspect of health and wellness.

**The importance of adding nutrition to the mix cannot be overstated.**

# Fueling

One study shows that participants lost 10.8% of weight by participating in a nutrition- and movement-focused program, compared to 8.5% for people who only focused on nutrition and 2.4% who only increased activity.<sup>6</sup>

# Health

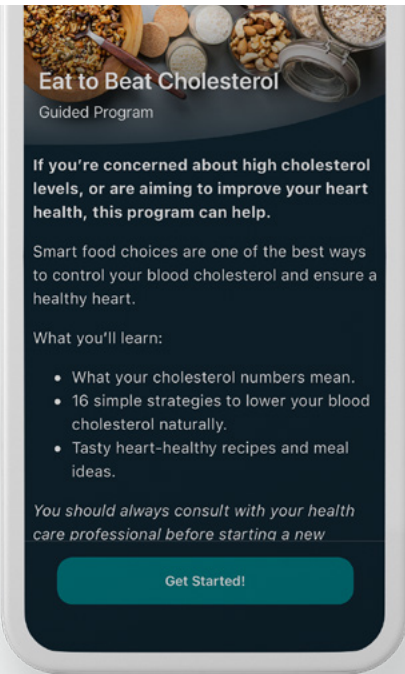


To reach health and wellness goals, nutrition is as equally important as activity. By using Fitbit devices to also track nutrition, people can make smarter decisions about what to eat so they can more easily meet their goals—whether it's simply feeling better every day, being more physically fit, or managing a chronic condition.

“Studies show that the DASH diet, which was a dietary approach to stop hypertension, is as effective and sometimes more effective than medications in lowering blood pressure,” said Dr. Parakh.

Dr. Parakh says that one of the challenges that his patients often find with improving nutrition is figuring out how to incorporate it into their daily lives.

“I recently had a patient who had heart failure and was trying to understand his disease. I told him he had to cut the salt in his diet, but didn’t have time in our consultation to explain exactly how to do that or which specific diet changes to make. I could only share a few high level sentences and he was on his own after that.”



“With a guided program like Kick your Salt Habit that he can find in the Fitbit Premium app, he has so much more support in bringing these recommendations to life and making them easy to follow.”





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# Rest is Best

“As a clinician, I’ve come to appreciate over time that sleep has gone from being a ‘nice to have’ when managing chronic disease to being a must have.”



—DR. PARAKH

Anyone who has ever pulled an all-nighter knows exactly how vital sleep is. Burning the midnight oil also means burning any chance of productivity the next day.



Studies show that a poor night’s sleep can result in:

LACK OF DRIVE

75%

SAY THEY ARE LESS PRODUCTIVE

BRAIN FOG

61%

OF PEOPLE SAY THEIR MEMORY IS WORSE<sup>7</sup>





While sleep plays a key role in having the energy to engage in activity and maintain a healthy diet, it also affects a person's physiology, which plays a significant role in meeting health and wellness goals.

"Regular sleep cycles have a profound impact on metabolism. Increasingly, there's new evidence that suggests that things like diabetes, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome are contributed to by your sleep," Dr. Parakh said.

Fitbit devices make it easier to create productive, sustainable sleep habits that help people make the most out of each day.

Studies show that 75% of people who use wearables to track sleep said they've made changes to their nighttime habits as a result of the tracking.<sup>8</sup>

*"If you're not getting a good night of sleep, it saps your motivation to improve your activity or nutrition."*

*Fitbit can improve sleep hygiene by helping people track their bed and wake time to create better sleep habits."*



—DR. MOORE



# 4. Stress Management





# Health is a state of mind

Stress is something almost everyone deals with: 84% of American adults report emotions associated with prolonged stress this year.

By improving the mind, people can improve their physical health and wellness—which in turn can even reduce stress, creating a positive feedback loop.







Fitbit devices now feature mindfulness exercises and content so that people can engage in quick stress-reduction exercises regularly or whenever they feel like they need an extra bit of help. Devices can also sense physical reactions like electrodermal activity so users get feedback during mindfulness exercises.

“I think that clinicians increasingly realize that just like physical health, mental health is such an important thing. We all face stress, so if you can use some of these tools to build up your resilience, then you can put your best foot forward,” Dr. Parakh said.



—DR. PARAKH

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# Make wellness

Fitbit devices are a critical tool for changing behavior in a way that changes overall health and wellness for the better. By making it easier to track results, stay motivated, and create a positive mind frame, it allows people to put in the effort necessary to create long-term physical results.

# a habit



“Fitbit’s wearables can put you in the state of mind where you’re ready to change your behaviors, where you have the energy, you’re not totally stressed out, and where you’re not devoid of sleep.

That gives you the opportunity to build resilience to work on activity and nutrition.”



—DR. MOORE



# Taking the long view

It can sometimes take a long time to see the benefit of a changed behavior, making it difficult to stay motivated. Fitbit lets people track daily changes to multiple key indicators like activity, nutrition, sleep levels, and stress levels so users can achieve progress every day.

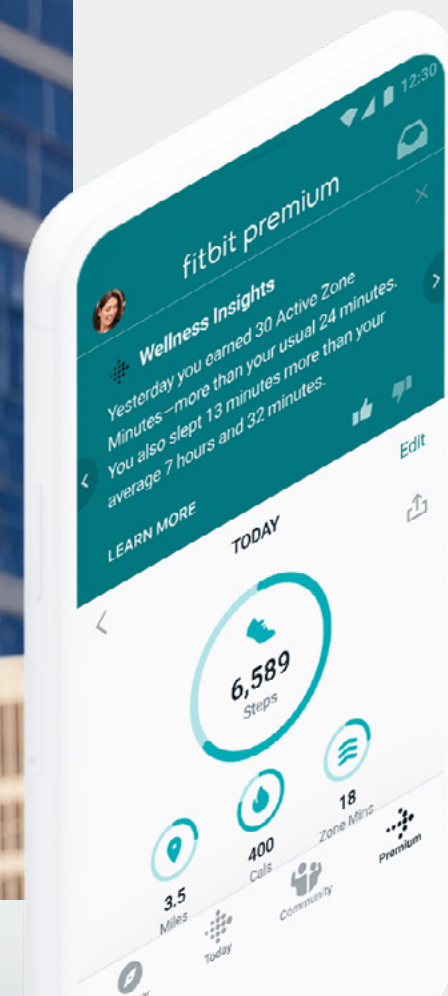
It's this continued day-to-day progress that ultimately creates long-term habits that will

reduce things like blood pressure, glucose levels, and weight.

Another thing Fitbit helps people do is see the combined benefits of their efforts. By better understanding the impact sleep and stress have on activity and nutrition, and vice versa, people can make smarter choices across all four areas to improve their overall health. As a result,

people are more likely to achieve their long-term goals than if they were to focus on just one aspect.

By giving people access to more information daily, Fitbit devices help keep people on track so they don't get discouraged if they don't make progress toward their overall goals right away.





“I may be trying to be more active because I’m trying to have better cardiovascular health, but as I do that, I find out that it impacts my weight and blood glucose.”

You want to find every opportunity you can to build wins quickly, because those small wins build into bigger change. If you try to shoot for the moon right at the gate, you will lose people.”

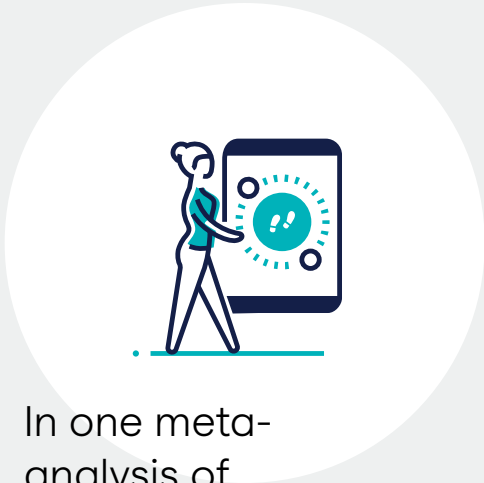


DR. MOORE

Tracking  
daily  
success

According to Dr. Moore, breaking big goals into smaller pieces and then providing support to reach those micro-goals is a proven approach for creating behavioral change.

Researchers have conducted numerous studies that show how Fitbit devices help make behavior change easier and more sustainable:



In one meta-analysis of 37 different interventions, those participants who used Fitbit had more steps, more moderate to vigorous physical activity, and more weight loss than those who did not.<sup>10</sup>

“This makes it easy to definitively answer the question of ‘Does this make a difference or not?’” Dr. Moore said.



In a study of patients using a leading diabetes management app, researchers compared the outcomes of patients before and after using Fitbit.

Once Fitbit was added, patients experienced a decrease in their LDL cholesterol, hemoglobin A1c, and blood glucose in only three months.<sup>11</sup>



In a study on diabetes prevention programs, researchers found that 1.4x more people were able to achieve 5% of weight loss or more when using Fitbit compared to people who did not.

“That’s a pretty significant improvement for a small cost to add on to an existing program,” Dr. Moore said.



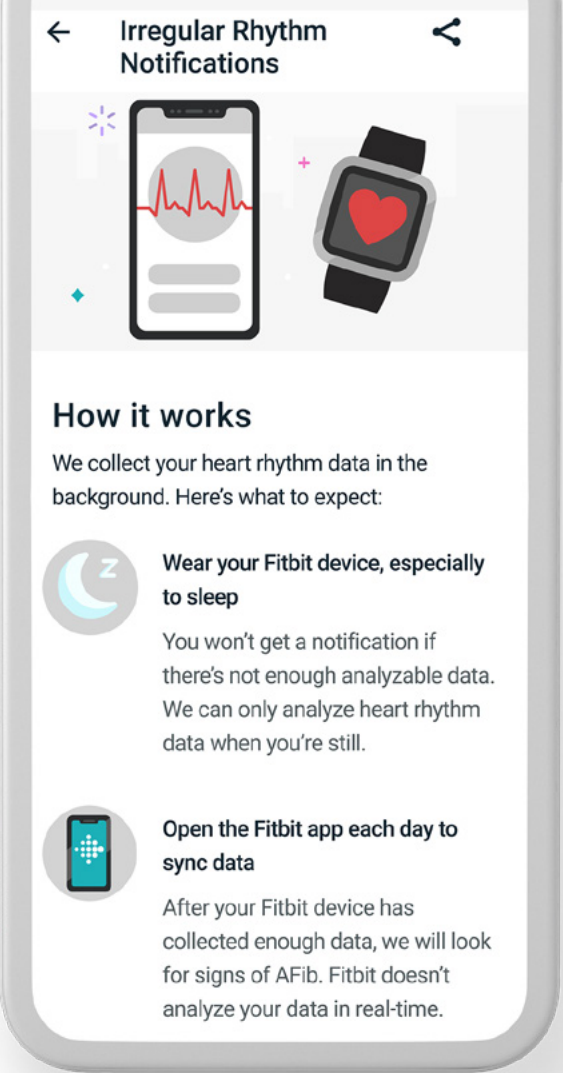
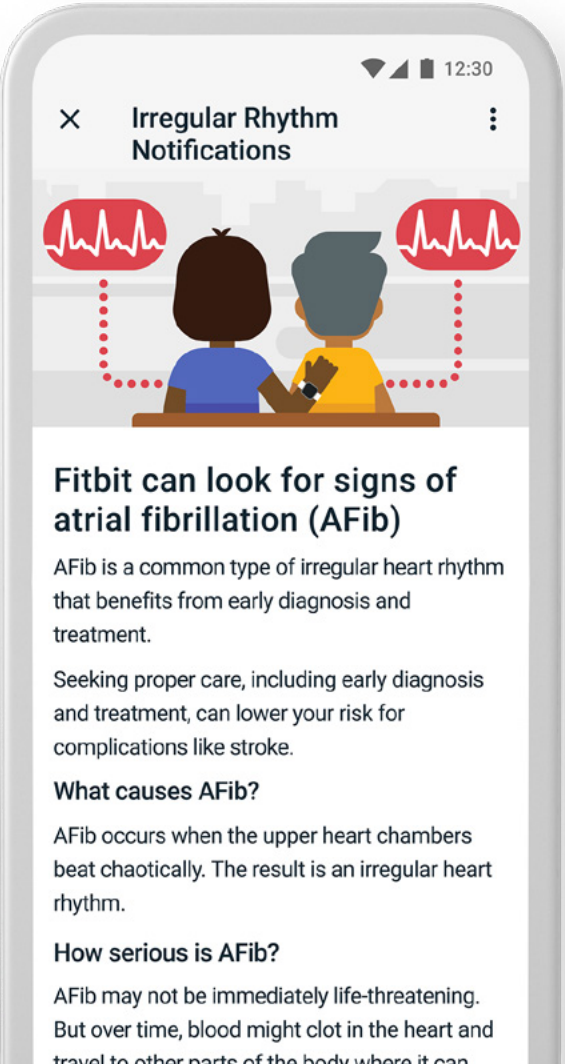


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# Insights into your insides

Fitbit's devices and apps make it simple to measure and track everything from resting heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood glucose to things like atrial fibrillation. This unlocks a whole new level of opportunities to improve health and detect disease before it has a major impact.



“The wonderful thing about EKG and AFib detection is that it reaches people where they are, which creates a new paradigm of screening called opportunistic screening,” said Dr. Parakh.





“Instead of screening people at a doctor’s office, what we’re doing is saying you happen to have this on, if you feel funny or have symptoms, you can just check your EKG, and if it shows at that moment that you might be in AFib go talk to your doctor and see if you might have this condition. It provides the opportunity to be there for the person at the right time, which they might not have otherwise had.”

While a Fitbit device doesn’t make a diagnosis, it does enable people to take a more active role by understanding when there may be a potential issue so they can get on the diagnostic pathway faster.

By getting people diagnosed sooner, it can prevent a minor episode from becoming something more dangerous.

“It’s complementary,” said Dr. Parakh. “You still have your clinician visit, but when you leave, we don’t see you again for a few months. During that time, the thing that’s with you is your Fitbit and the different measurements and programs it enables. It supports people throughout their journey of managing their chronic conditions and creating healthy behaviors.”

The Fitbit ECG app can’t detect heart attack, blood clots, stroke or other heart conditions. If you think you’re having a medical emergency, call emergency services.

The Fitbit ECG app is not intended for use by people under 22 years old.

You should never change your medication based on any result of the Fitbit ECG app without first speaking to your doctor. The results of the Fitbit ECG app may not be accurate in people who take medication or substances that affect heart rate or blood flow.

“By getting people diagnosed sooner, it can prevent a minor episode from becoming something more dangerous.”

 —DR. PARAKH





# Take the next step

Fitbit’s personalized health experience helps drive healthy behavior change across physical activity, sleep, nutrition, and stress management.

It easily integrates into the health initiatives you have in place, extending and enhancing their impact. Interested in hearing more on this topic from Dr. Moore and Dr. Parakh?

Watch their fireside chat, *From Step Tracker to Health and Wellbeing Companion: Google Doctors Discuss the Evolution of Fitbit*

[WATCH NOW](#)

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