

Appendix C

Buying a Pedometer

Pedometers are a great way to find out how many steps you take in a day—whether through NEAT activities such as your daily chores or as part of your formal EAT Walking Program. They’ve even been found to improve health by motivating users to increase the amount of physical activity they get, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.^{*} But with so many models out there to choose from, it can be hard to know what’s best. Here are some tips to make choosing a pedometer that suits your needs a little easier.

Features. Basic, inexpensive pedometers simply count steps. More advanced models also give calorie counts and measure distance by multiplying the number of steps by stride length—but these features have been found to be fairly problematic to use and are often inaccurate. A more accurate, but more expensive, option is a GPS-based pedometer. Other common options include alarms, backlights (useful if you walk early in the morning or late in the evening), memory functions, pulse meters, even radios! But before you spend the extra money, think about which of those additional features you’re likely to use.

Accuracy. Reports show that the accuracy of many pedometers varies, particularly at low speed. Several Web sites, including www.medicinenet.com, www.ConsumerSearch.com, and www.pedometers.com, offer suggestions and reports on accuracy of various models, or check out the user reviews on sites like www.amazon.com. Once you do choose a model, be sure you position it correctly, according to manufacturer’s instructions. Most pedometers are worn at the waist, and should be placed as close to the hipbone as possible.

Style. Like many cell phones, pedometers come in open-face and flip-down styles. You may find that one type is more comfortable to wear, or gives you better access to the buttons and screen. If you buy an open-face model, try to find one with a protective cover so the buttons don’t get accidentally bumped. Whichever type you choose, make sure the screen is easy to read. Ideally, you want to be able to read the information without taking off the pedometer.

And of course, don’t forget to record your daily steps in your NEAT and EAT logs to make sure you’re meeting or even exceeding your goals!

^{*}Bravata, D. M., et al., “Using Pedometers to Increase Physical Activity and Improve Health,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 298 (November 21, 2007): 2296–2304.