

Apple lets users track menstrual period cycles on Health app, Watch with software update

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Within the variety of announcements made at the Worldwide Developers Conference this week, Apple revealed it will be adding new menstrual tracking software to the Health app with the upcoming iOS 13 and

Watch OS 6 update.

The Cycle Tracker will help those who menstruate predict future periods, track symptoms such as spotting and cramps, record cycle history and even predict fertility windows—all of which can help take the surprise out of menstruation and reproduction, said Dr. Leena Nathan, assistant clinical professor at the Department of OB-GYN at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"It is very beneficial for women to keep track of their cycles," said Dr. Nathan. "We know that ovulation occurs approximately 14 days before your period begins, so for women who are either trying to get pregnant or trying to avoid pregnancy, it can be helpful to get a sense of how long your cycle is and when ovulation may be occurring."

Reproductive health [software](#) was added to the Health app on iPhones in 2015 after Apple received criticism for not including it in the Health Kit release in 2014.

The software is new to the Apple Health App but is far from a unique concept on its app store. In 2016, there were over 1,000 free [menstrual cycle](#) tracking apps on the iOS app store with similar functions as Apple's Cycle Tracker. However, a study found only 20 of those apps were actually accurate when it came to tracking periods and fertility, and only 5 percent cited medical literature or health professionals.

Still, menstrual apps can help users with irregularities or abnormal reproductive cycles better track their menstruation patterns and determine if something is out of the ordinary.

"The app can give you a sense over a period of several months of what your cycle is doing, and if you notice that you are very irregular or you're skipping some periods or having more than one period in a month, then

it would be important to visit your OB-GYN in order to discuss that and be evaluated about why your cycles are so irregular," said Nathan.

Other menstrual apps have been known to sell the data input by users to third-parties. Apple says it does not sell its data to others.

The Cycle Tracker will also be available on the Apple Watch. FitBit and Garmin watches introduced menstrual period tracking features within the last year.

Another group of apps prevalent on the iOS [app store](#) are pregnancy apps users can download once they conceive, giving various information such as comparing the size of the fetus to everyday items or prenatal care advice. From Apple's description of the menstrual software, it does not appear as if the new software will dive into that end of reproductive [health](#).

In addition to menstrual tracking, the iOS 13 update will also include noise tracking, notifying users when the noise around them is too loud and potentially damaging to their hearing.

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