Pokémon GO Leads to a Major Surge in U.S. Activity Levels

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During the last month, Pokémon GO—the new augmented reality video game that sends people out into the real world to hunt down cute critters on their smartphones—has been more than just a revolution in gaming. According to recent data from several mobile fitness apps, the Pokémon GO craze sweeping America has also had a major effect on our fitness, The Washington Post reports.

For those unfamiliar with Pokémon GO, the game uses Google Maps, GPS tracking and smartphone cameras to place digital monsters, item-collection points called PokéStops and virtual battle arenas at places of interest around the real world. The game's main focus is to urge users to go out and explore their surroundings, walk from place to place to capture Pokémon, pit them against one another and work with other players in teams to defend their territory. The game requires users to walk—a lot.

According to recent data from Cardiogram, an app for Apple Watch that evaluates exercise information from nearly 35,000 users, the weekend Pokémon GO launched in the United States, the number of users exercising for 30 minutes or more a day jumped from 45 percent to 53 percent in just three days.

Another fitness app, Jawbone, found that their users who mentioned Pokémon GO on comment boards and messaging features included in the app walked nearly 62 percent more than usual. Meanwhile, on Under Armour's MyFitnessPal app, users started inputting Pokémon GO each day into their e-fitness plans. Those users burned an average of 250 to 300 calories per gaming session.

"There's always been this idea that fitness and gaming could come together and make something special for users, and, frankly, it's been tried by countless apps and companies before," said Mike Caldwell, the cofounder of Pacer, another activity tracker app that documented a 10 percent increase in steps among its users younger than 30 since Pokémon GO came out. "But nobody has ever really broken through to such a mass audience before with such a compelling product. It really shows that there's still a lot of innovation left to be done in our domain."

Currently, surveys show that a week after Pokémon GO was released in the United States, the game boasted nearly 25 million active users and remains one of the most popular apps in the world right now.

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