Engaging Participants with MyCap

MyCap offers several features to foster participant engagement and retention throughout the life of your project/study including:

- In-app notifications when tasks are due
- Secure, bi-directional messaging and study-wide announcements
- Easy in-app access to contacts and links
- Personalized return of results
- Study engagement indicators

This guide provides helpful tips and practical insights for using each feature, along with real-world examples from teams that have shared how they use them.

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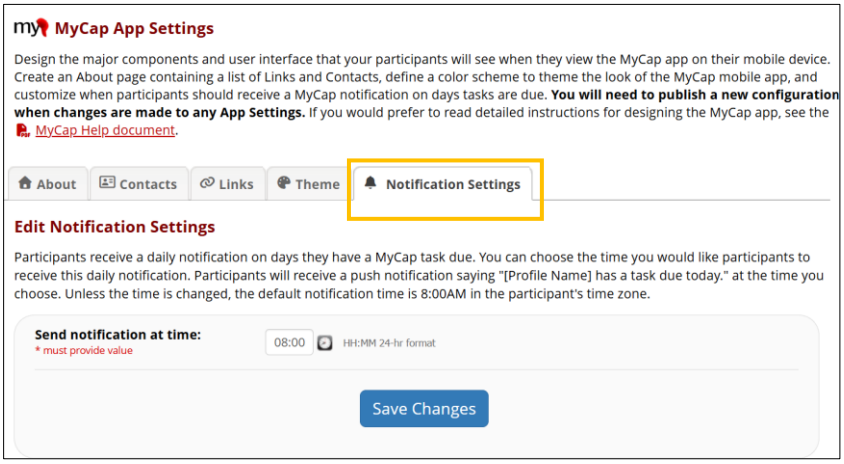
Task Notifications

To help participants stay on track with their study tasks, MyCap sends a once-daily in-app notification on any day tasks are due. Study teams can designate what time this notification is sent to participants. The default time is 8 AM in the **participant's time zone**.

Designating Timing of Task Notifications

- ☐ Navigate to the **Online Designer** > **App Settings** > **Notification Settings**.
- ☐ Edit the time participants will receive their task notification if you want it sent at a time other than 8 AM in the participants' time zone. Click **Save Changes** and **Publish new MyCap version**.



Notes and Best Practices:

1. **Notification limitations**: MyCap supports one notification per day. For example, if a participant has multiple tasks on the same day, they will receive a single notification.
2. **Enabling notifications**: To ensure participants receive notifications, encourage them to click, "Allow Notifications" when they join your project.
3. **Time zone adjustments**: If the participant changes time zones, they will receive the notification at 8 AM *in their new time zone*.

Feature in practice: Check out how researchers in Ontario and Seattle used MyCap notifications to remind participants of daily, weekly, biweekly, and monthly surveys in a study on individuals with Li-Fraumeni syndrome (LFS). They reported that, **"The *MyCap app facilitated continuous engagement and data collection*, *allowing us to gather comprehensive information on participants' health and well-being*."**

Participant Communication

MyCap offers two ways to communicate with participants throughout the life of your project: **bidirectional messaging** and **study wide announcements.**

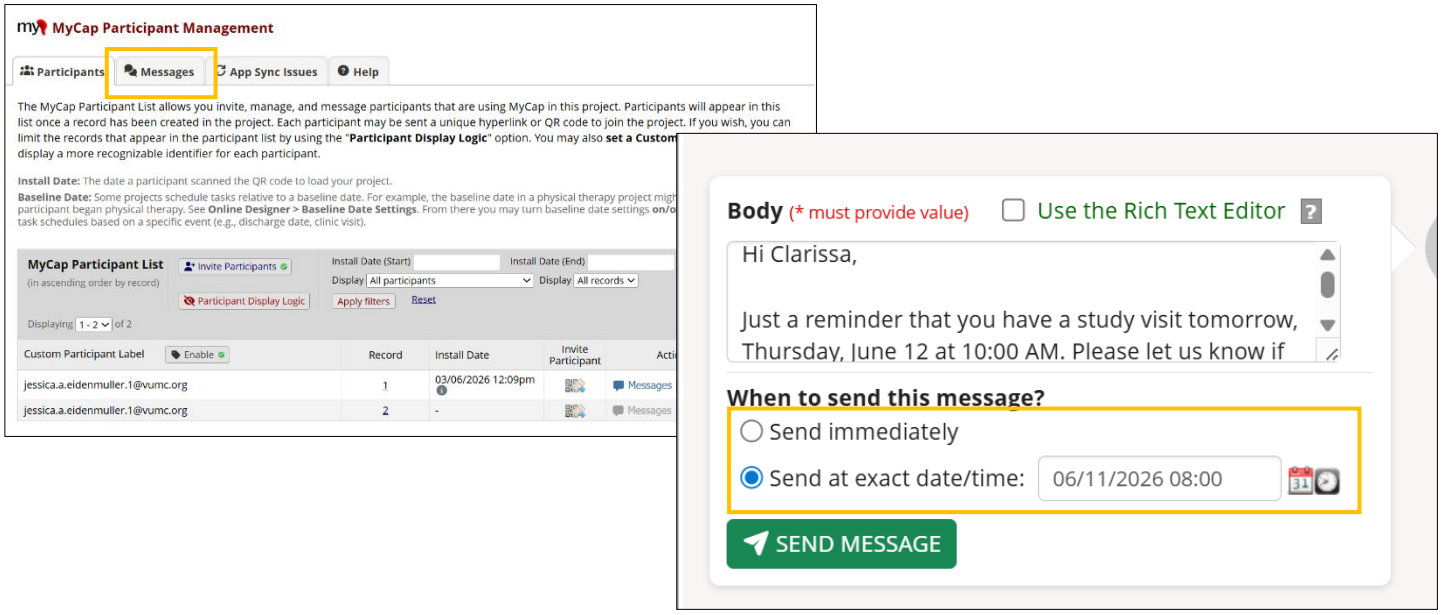
Sending and Receiving Bi-directional Messages

If you need to communicate with an individual participant, you can send and receive secure messages via the **MyCap Participant Management** > **Messages**. Sending a message to a participant will trigger a

notification that says, "*You have a secure message waiting*" if there is one profile on the device or "*[Profile name] has a message waiting*" if there are multiple profiles on the device.

<u>To send a new message to a participant:</u>

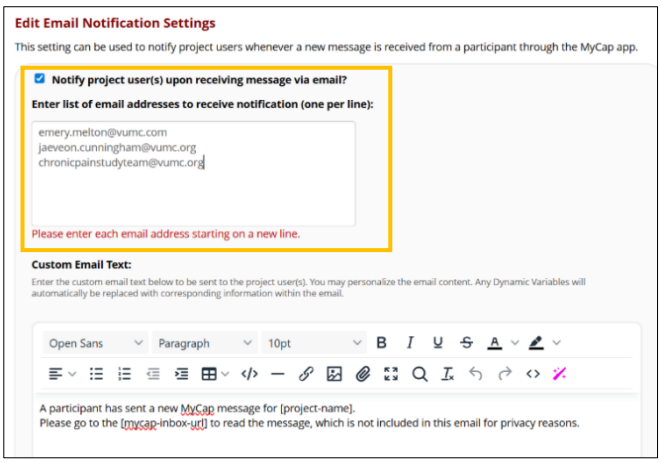
- ☐ Navigate to the **MyCap Participant Management** > **Messages**.
- ☐ Select **Messages** by the participant you wish to message.
- ☐ Compose your message. Rich text editor can be used to create more visually appealing messages.
- ☐ Designate whether you wish to send the message immediately or at a date in the future (**REDCap 16.0.9** (LTS 16.0.10*). Scheduled messages can be edited or deleted before they are sent, but not after*.

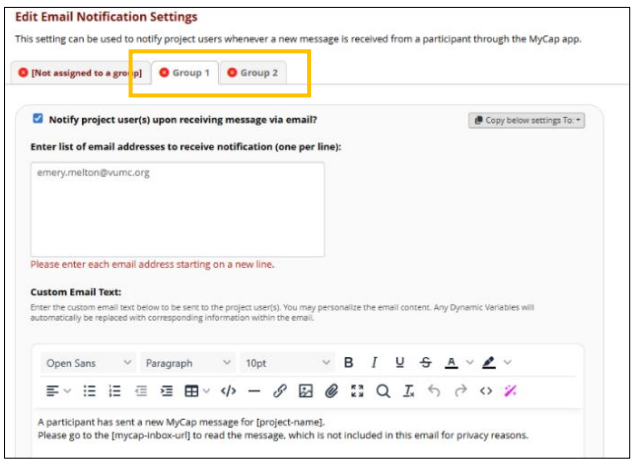


<u>Recommended:</u> <u>Study Teams can receive an email **when a participant sends a messages via MyCap** (REDCap 15.7.0):</u>

- ☐ Navigate to **MyCap Participant Management** > **Messages** > **Email Notification Settings**
- ☐ Compose an email notification and specify the email address(es) that should be alerted whenever a MyCap message is received from a participant in the project.

If Data Access Groups (DAGs) are used in your project, you can define email notification settings that are DAG-specific. In the same section, click on the appropriate DAG in the top menu to compose your message and specify which email addresses should be alerted when a participant in that DAG messages.



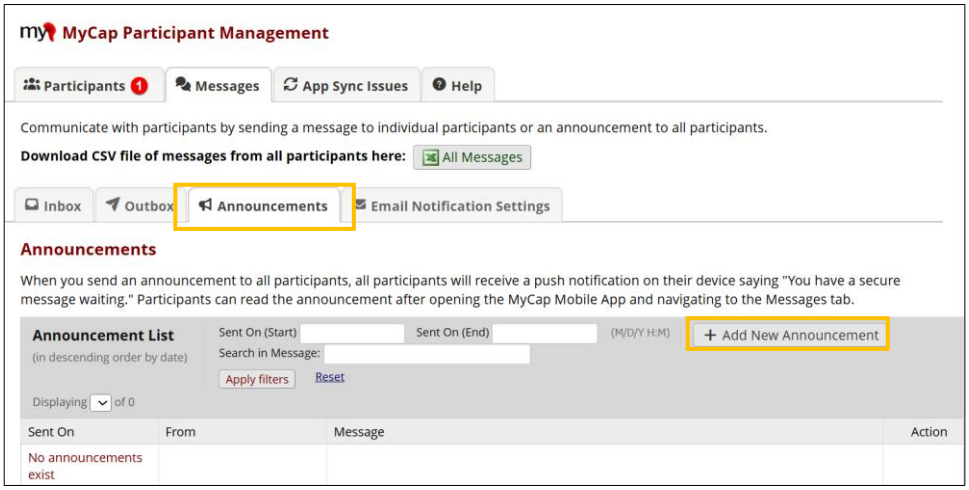


Sending Study-wide Announcements

If you want to communicate with your entire participant population, you can send a study-wide announcement. This will trigger a notification that says, "You have a secure messaging" if there is one profile on the device or "*[Profile name] has a message waiting*" if there are multiple profiles on the device.

To send a study-wide announcement:

- ☐ Navigate to **MyCap Participant Management** > **Messages** > **Announcements**
- ☐ Click **Add New Announcement** and compose your message. The rich text editor can be used to create more visually appealing messages.
- ☐ Designate whether you wish to send the announcement immediately or at a date in the future (REDCap 16.0.9). *Scheduled announcements can be edited or removed before or after they are sent.*



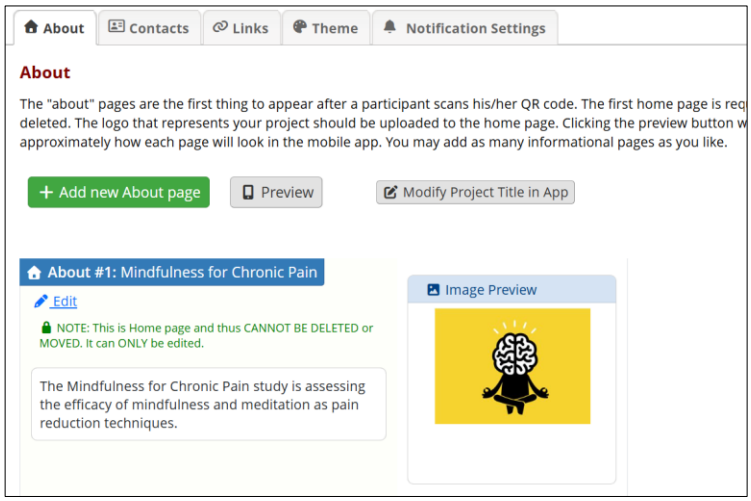
Notes and Best Practices:

1. **Scheduling in advance**: Planning messages or announcements ahead of time can streamline communication and reduce manual effort for study teams. Consider scheduling messages for milestones such as birthdays, study anniversaries, or visit reminders. *Note: Recurring scheduling is not currently supported.*
2. **Track message follow-up:** You can mark messages as "Action Required" (Yes or No) in your inbox or outbox. This helps prioritize follow-up and stay organized when managing participant communication.
3. **Searching for messages**: You can locate messages by searching key words or timelines in either your inbox or outbox (**MyCap Participant Management** > **Messages** > **Inbox/Outbox**).
4. **Message History**: You can download a CSV of all messages by clicking "Download CSV file of messages from all participants here" in **MyCap Participant Management** > **Messages**

Feature in practice: Check out how researchers at the University of Iowa are currently using MyCap to send **"retention messages"** including messages for birthdays, study anniversaries, holidays, and visit and survey completion reminders in a study assessing two dietary interventions for adults with Multiple Sclerosis. They report using regular contact to identify participants at risk of dropout and provide additional support to maintain study adherence.

Equipping Participants with Resources

Study teams can add intro (about pages), contacts, and links (resources) to their project so that participants have **easy, one-click access to important information.**



<u>To configure each section:</u>

- ☐ Navigate to **Online Designer** > **App Settings**
- ☐ Use the tabs in the top menu to:
  - Create an About Page (include a title, image, and relevant details)
  - Add contacts
  - Include useful resource links for participants

Notes and Best Practices:

1. **About Page**: Keep it clear and participant-focused—briefly explain the study purpose, what participants can expect, and why their participation matters to reinforce engagement from the start.
2. **Contacts**: Consider adding at least responsive point and contact and specify when/how participants can expect a reply to build trust and reduce uncertainty.
3. **Links:** Include essential, high-value resources (e.g., study materials, support services) and label them clearly so participants can quickly find what they need without feeling overwhelmed.

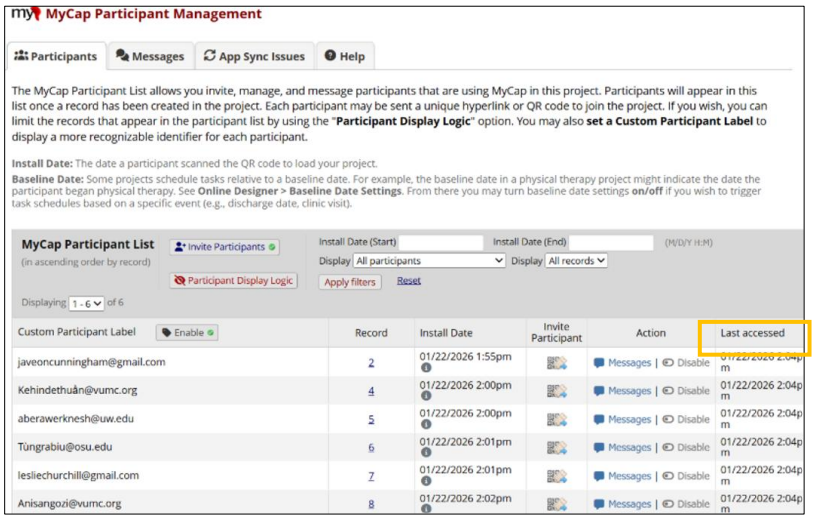
Feature in practice: Explore how researchers in Australia are using MyCap in a longitudinal study to evaluate the impact of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and other respiratory illnesses in young children. In this study, parents collect nasal swabs from their children and complete health surveys through the MyCap app. After enrolling, families receive a study kit by mail containing instructions, information sheets, lab request forms, and other materials, *all of which are also accessible digitally within MyCap. Video instructions on how to perform the nasal swab was also available in MyCap for easy access.*

Monitoring Adherence

MyCap enables study teams to monitor data completion in real time, helping identify missed activities and enabling personalized follow-up.

With REDCap 16.0.6, the MyCap Participant List contains a “Last accessed” column that displays the most recent date and time a participant accessed your project in the MyCap App. This value represents participant activity after they first joined and does not include their initial entry into the project, which is separately recorded in the "Install Date" column. If a participant has a record in your project but has not yet joined in MyCap, the “Install Date” and “Last Accessed” columns will be empty.

To view the “Last Accessed” timestamp, head to **MyCap Participant Management** and view the far-right column.



Notes and Best Practices:

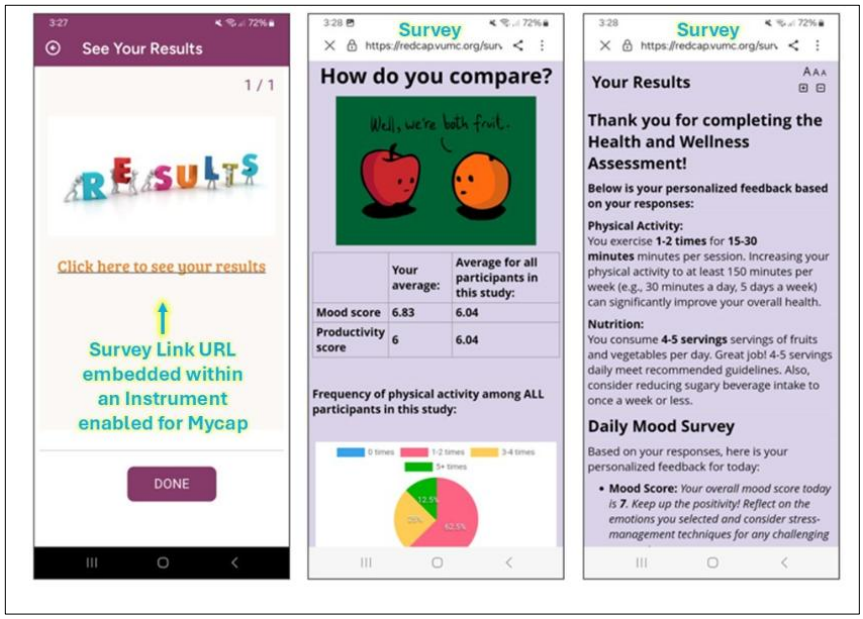
- **Identifying early disengagement**: The “Last Accessed” column can be helpful for identifying early indicators of disengagement. If a participant has not accessed MyCap for several days or weeks (depending on the study’s schedule), this may signal early disengagement before it results in incomplete tasks or withdrawal. This insight can support personalize outreach with timely nudges using MyCap’s secure messaging (e.g., *“Hi! It looks like it’s been a while. Your participation in this study is extremely valuable to us, and you’re already 25% done– keep going!”)* or study-wide announcements when broader disengagement is observed.
- **Operational efficiency**: Teams facing engagement or retention challenges can also utilize the “Last Accessed” column to optimize workflow:
    - Prioritize participants who may need follow-up soon
    - Avoid unnecessary outreach to participants who appear active
    - Focus staff time and effort where it will have the greatest impact
    - Strengthen overall data quality by intervening promptly when access patterns suggest risk to data completeness
- **Additional monitoring**: Study teams can also monitor task adherence by confirming data is submitted to REDCap as expected.

Feature in practice: Check out how researchers in Europe who conducted a longitudinal light exposure study used MyCap/REDCap to review incoming data twice daily and follow up when entries were missing or incomplete. *They wrote, “Maintaining contact with the participants during the week, monitoring their compliance, and reinstructing them when needed were essential to promote engagement throughout the study.”*

Additionally, in a study led by researchers at UCLA and George Washington University, MyCap was used to collect data from adolescents with post-concussion symptoms. The team leveraged real-time visibility into task completion to identify participants who may be disengaging and proactively reached out with reminders or support. *They reported that monitoring data completion served as an effective retention tool, helping keep participants engaged between study visits*.

Returning Results to Participants

Users can include REDCap Survey Links within a MyCap task to deliver personalized results to participants based on their responses. Results can be based on an instrument completed one time or contain calculated / aggregate results across multiple instances. Providing participants access to their own data can enhance engagement by increasing transparency, reinforcing participants' sense of ownership, and helping them see the value of their ongoing contributions.



See our Using REDCap Survey Links in MyCap Quick Guide for detailed instructions on returning results to participants.