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Ford Researches Adding Medical Monitoring to Sync In-Car System


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[Ford Motor Co. \(F\)](#) is researching ways to add medical monitoring features to its in-car communication system so drivers with disorders such as diabetes, asthma or allergies may avoid attacks that could lead to crashes.

Ford is developing ways to connect medical devices to its voice-activated Sync system, the Dearborn, Michigan-based automaker said today in a statement. The technology may help diabetics monitor glucose levels on a dashboard screen or over the audio system and avoid lightheadedness, blurry vision or other symptoms that may be dangerous while driving, Ford said.

Ford said its Sync system, available on almost all models, is an important factor in 50 percent of purchases. The newest version, which features an 8-inch dashboard touch screen, was criticized in January by Consumer Reports magazine for being complicated and “frustrating.” U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has said Sync can lead to driver distraction.

“Ford’s approach to health and wellness in the vehicle is not about trying to take on the role of health-care or medical provider, we’re a car company,” Gary Strumolo, Ford’s manager of interiors, infotainment and health and wellness research, said in the statement. Ford is trying to “create a secondary alert system and alternate outlet for real-time patient coaching.”

About 78 percent of U.S. consumers are interested in mobile health solutions, Ford said, citing a survey by [Harris Interactive](#) and CTIA-The Wireless Association. Ford said [Apple Inc. \(AAPL\)](#)’s App store now has more than 17,000 health applications.

Phone Applications

Ford also is researching smartphone applications that could connect to Sync and provide drivers with allergy alerts that give current pollen levels and other information for people with asthma, colds and coughs and ultraviolet sensitivity.

Ford said it is conducting the research with glucose- monitoring device maker [Medtronic Inc. \(MDT\)](#); WellDoc Inc., a provider of integrated [health services](#), and SDI Health, creators of the allergy website www.pollen.com.

The second-largest U.S. automaker didn't say when it might begin offering these features to consumers.

"We want to broaden the paradigm, transforming Sync into a tool that can help improve people's lives as well as the driving experience," Paul Mascarenas, Ford's chief technology officer, said in the statement.