



“Attention: This Is Your Car Speaking.”

By Clay Wirestone
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How many times has this happened to you? You're driving somewhere and something feels off. You suspect that your blood sugar level may be dropping, but you plow ahead. Now, imagine your car sounding the alarm: "Attention: This is your car speaking. Your blood sugar is low. Pull over and eat a snack."

Science fiction? A particularly bad episode of Knight Rider? Not at all. Ford has teamed up with medical device powerhouse Medtronic to test a system that connects cars to the continuous blood glucose monitors (CGMs) of diabetic drivers.

The technology to connect automobile with device already exists. Ford cars include a system called "Sync," which allows drivers to control various computing functions by voice alone. Right now, the system features Bluetooth, cloud computing, and app functionality. Ford says that these links could easily include health information.

Medtronic sounds excited to be collaborating with Ford. "Diabetes in particular is a chronic disease where frequent monitoring of blood glucose levels throughout the day is critical," said James Dallas, a Medtronic senior vice president. "As medical and consumer technologies converge, Medtronic is uniquely positioned to provide patients, caregivers, and physicians with actionable insight from the data our devices can gather from the human body."

But Ford isn't just looking at the needs of people with diabetes. It's also considering how the Sync service could help people with asthma. The system could tell drivers---through a connection to a smart phone application---how much pollen is in the air. The dashboard could even display a warning message: "Attention: Pollen has risen to unacceptable levels. Prepare yourself before stepping outside."

The needs of both groups could be addressed through a connection to WellDoc, a service that offers personally tailored medical advice. You could simply talk to your car and receive health tips drawn from a wealth of authoritative sources.

You can't go off to a car lot and buy a diabetes-friendly Ford quite yet. The company says that research on these applications is still ongoing, although it admits that some of them could be adopted relatively easily. It's also taking a longer-term view, working with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to see if new technology can reduce drivers' stress levels.

"Health and wellness provide a tremendous opportunity for Ford to provide peace of mind and a personal benefit to drivers and passengers while they are in our vehicles," said Ford's Gary Strumolo.