

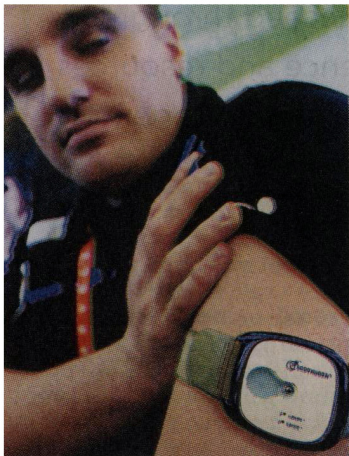
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BUSINESS

Gadgets don't email, but they can help you get fit



FREDERIC J. BROWN/GETTY-AFP PHOTO

BodyMedia's armband tracks activity, calories and other data.

In the gadget industry, it's not just TVs and smartphones that are getting slimmed down. Companies also want to help humans lose weight.

A host of health and fitness devices are vying for attention, with manufacturers trying to show that wearable gadgets can help consumers track calories, physical activity, sleep and more.

"The definition of fitness was broken in America," said Lexy Franklin, head of strategy and design at Striiv. Instead of urging people to hit the gym for long, daily workouts, a model that doesn't seem to work for many

people, the company makes a small device that promotes what Franklin called "grab-and-go fitness."

The Striiv gadget, which fits on a key chain, monitors activity such as walking, stair climbing and sleep. The device — \$99 on Amazon — enables users to set small goals such as walking one more mile than the previous day or beating a personal average.

Striiv users walk an average of three miles and climb eight flights of stairs a day, said Franklin. He averaged eight miles a day at this month's International Consumer Electronics Show, where he went

to drum up business.

Other gadget-makers are also taking a motivational approach to encouraging healthier habits. In the case of BodyMedia, the company is trying to stand out by teaming with IBM to analyze consumers' fitness and nutrition. Users wear the BodyBugg armband (\$179.99 on Amazon) equipped with four sensors that can collect 5,000 pieces of data per minute about activity levels, calories burned and sleep efficiency.

BodyMedia's system uses IBM software to crunch the data and provide tips on how armband wearers can meet or beat calorie-

burning goals. For example, the program might tell you to hop on the treadmill or vigorously clean house for an hour.

Ford, for its part, is demonstrating prototype technology in which, using voice commands, a driver can get information on pollen levels and air quality.

If a person is asthmatic, the car could "intelligently route you around poor air-quality areas," suggesting a route that makes health a priority over distance or speed, said Ford's Gary Strumolo.

— Wailin Wong,
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