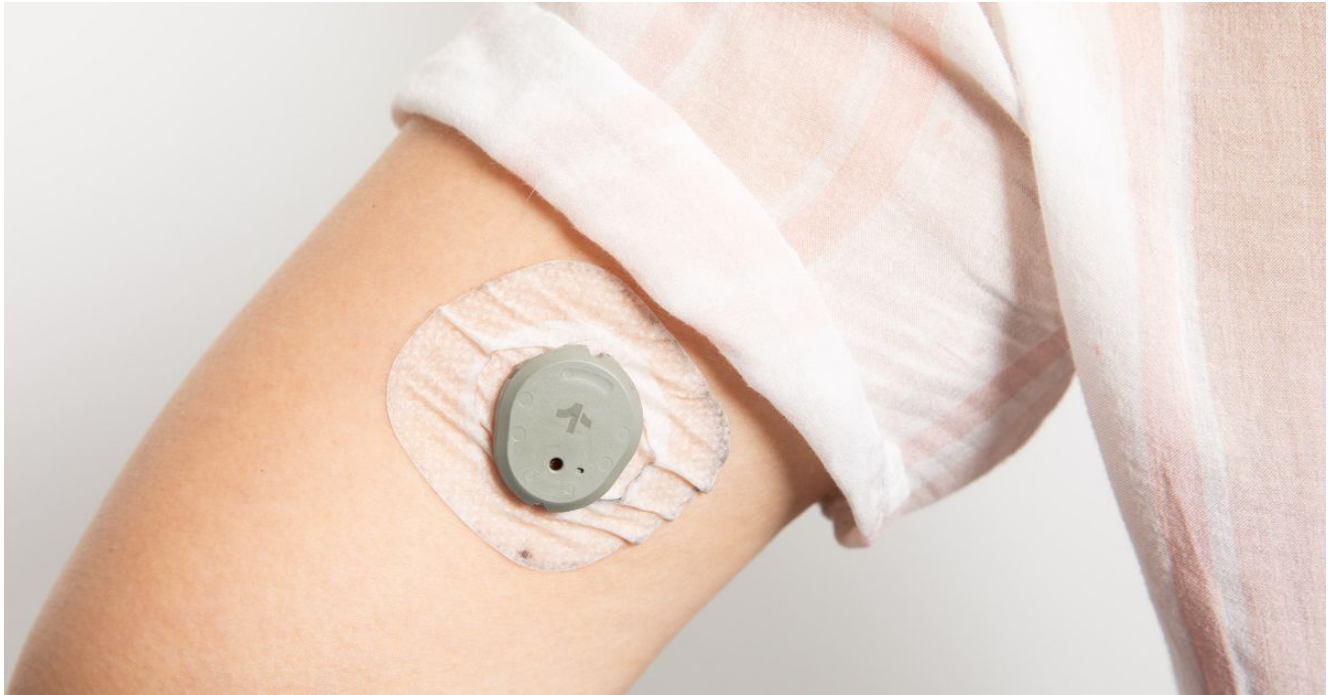


This over-the-counter gadget could help the war against diabetes



As a wearables reviewer, every morning I roll over, pull out my phone, and check my sleep stats. But that's changed in the last 14 days. Instead, I've been checking my glucose levels. That's because on the underside of my left arm is a Dexcom Stelo continuous glucose monitor (CGM). Some days, I'm relieved by what I see. Other days, I wonder if I should call my doctor.

The Stelo is unique in that it's one of three FDA-cleared over-the-counter CGMs. (The other two are from Abbott.) Typically, CGMs have been used by Type 1 diabetics – those who produce little to no insulin, a hormone that regulates blood sugar – to monitor their condition. The Stelo, however, is aimed at Type 2 diabetics, specifically those who don't rely on insulin. Unlike Type 1, Type 2 diabetes develops over time as the body becomes more insulin resistant. While some Type 2 diabetics rely on insulin, the vast majority manage their

blood sugar with lifestyle changes and oral medication.

The pitch of OTC CGMs like Stelo is they could theoretically help people with Type 2 get to manageable levels where they don't have to take medication. For prediabetics, it could even help them reverse their condition. In these use cases, a CGM could be a nifty tool for learning how certain foods or exercise impact glucose levels.

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despite the big ole needle, it's painless.

Overall, I found Stelo easy to use. The data is kept relatively streamlined, without much visual clutter. However, it does require a degree of vigilance. I've had a handful of glucose spikes in the past two weeks, but the alerts don't come through on my phone until 20-60 minutes later. (You can watch spikes happen closer to real-time, however, if you continually monitor the app. It's just not always practical.)

That's not necessarily egregious, as this isn't designed for Type 1 diabetics, but it's not great. I also wished it was easier to log my meals. These days I've been tracking my macros in another app, so it would've been nice to just import that information into the Stelo app. Instead, I had to cross reference and manually log everything twice.

But what would've been most helpful is extra insight into interpreting my glucose data. (Quick note: I've been testing a pre-release version of the app so not everything was as it'll be in the final product.) There's no way to view your daily historical data long-term. If I want to show my doctor a pattern of how my glucose spikes after certain exercises, I have to take a screenshot that day. I'm also not sure whether my numbers are good. While I managed to spend about 95 percent

of the time in my recommended range, my average glucose level is higher than what it was while testing Nutrisense last year. I've also been mildly concerned at how many glucose spikes I've had that don't have an obvious explanation like high-intensity exercise or a carb-heavy meal.