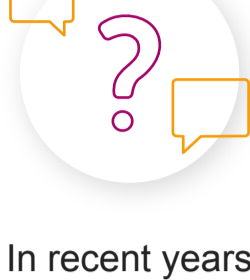


## Recognizing the potential of fitness trackers in diabetes care

Tech-up Perspectives  
Issue 3 | December 2023

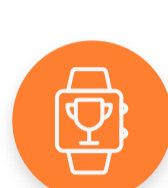
In this issue, Diabetes Tech-up™ podcast cohost Dr Alicia Shelly discusses the untapped benefits of wearable fitness tech in diabetes care. There's also the [next podcast episode](#) and [next article](#) from Dr Amy Hess-Fischl and Amy Tenderich digging into helpful metrics for assessing daily glycemic control.



### Dr Shelly, what are the main reasons you recommend fitness trackers to people with diabetes?

In recent years, I've noticed more of my patients wearing smartwatches or fitness trackers. According to a survey of 1007 adults from 6 Federally Qualified Health Centers, 1 in 5 Americans own a wearable fitness tracker.<sup>1</sup> Personally, I really enjoy smartwatches—I've worn some kind of fitness tracker for more than a decade.

There are some obvious reasons to recommend wearable fitness devices to patients—they count your steps, track your sleep, tell you to stand up, and so on. But there are also some less obvious ways that fitness trackers are enhancing the conversations I have with my patients.

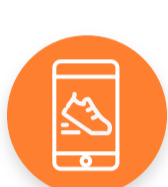


#### Built-in motivation

In my practice, I've talked to more than one patient who thought they didn't have time for physical activity. Sometimes it's the truth, but if the person has a fitness tracker, I can say, "Let's look at your activity," and we can often find 30 minutes in their daily routine when they can be active. Or maybe they're already more active than they realize, so we can focus on different stats their device is collecting to find other ways they might want to improve their health. It's sort of like looking at the negative space in an image—there are insights hidden in what you *don't* see.

I also have patients who are motivated by competitions with their family and friends. One person I talked to told me about a time they were getting ready for bed when they noticed they had a chance to pull ahead of their friend, so they got up and climbed a few more flights of stairs before sleeping.

Small pushes like these can help people start to make big changes.<sup>2</sup>



#### Linking fitness with diabetes management<sup>3</sup>

As a primary care provider, I try to give people with diabetes space to tell me what they want to focus on. However, I've noticed there are some opportunities with tech that patients aren't as aware of. I've found that many patients don't realize there are diabetes monitoring apps that can integrate fitness trackers and continuous glucose monitors (CGMs).<sup>3</sup>

If I have someone who is struggling to make a connection between exercising more and managing their diabetes, this might be an opportunity to educate them on tech that's out there. I might say, "Hey, your CGM app can actually send alerts to your watch if your blood sugar starts getting low during your workout. Let me show you how to set that up."

Just like that, there's a new dimension to how they engage with their self-management.



#### The next step—crossing the data streams

I believe that after we raise awareness of how diabetes tech can talk to fitness trackers, the next step is helping people understand how to synthesize the data from these devices. I know of one smartwatch that can display glucose levels and trends captured by a CGM alongside other metrics that a person would track during physical activity.<sup>3</sup>

I think if more people could see the story that fitness and diabetes tech can tell together, they could make more positive changes in their self-management.

**I think the most compelling reason to recommend fitness trackers is that they may allow people to bring new healthcare goals to my attention. If you have a patient wearing a fitness tracker, it doesn't have to be the focus of your visit, but make sure you're listening when they talk about it—it'll probably be time well spent.**



#### Alicia Shelly, MD, FACP

Dr Shelly is a primary care provider who regularly sees patients with diabetes. She is a board-certified internal medicine physician at Wellstar Primary Care in Douglasville, GA.

Dr Shelly received a fee from Novo Nordisk for her participation.

### Latest on DiabetesTechUp.com



#### PODCAST

#### Ep 5: Tech, please! Automating data capture and diabetes management tasks

In this episode, our cohosts look at ways to save time while strengthening the relationship between patients and providers. Topics include telehealth, diabetes data logging, and insulin dosing.

20 min listen

[Listen now →](#)

#### ARTICLE

#### Creating "aha!" moments: 3 ways I use diabetes tech to help overcome self-management barriers

My step-by-step approach to helping patients discover tech in their own way.

Alicia Shelly, MD, FACP | 6 min read

[Read the article →](#)

#### References:

- Holko M, Litwin TR, Munoz F, et al. Wearable fitness tracker use in federally qualified health center patients: strategies to improve the health of all of us using digital health devices. *NPJ Digit Med.* 2022 Apr 25;5(1):53. doi:10.1038/s41746-022-00593-x
- Gardner B, Lally P, Wardle J. Making health habitual: the psychology of 'habit-formation' and general practice. *Br J Gen Pract.* 2012 Dec;62(605):664-6. doi:10.3399/bjgp12X659466
- Monitoring Diabetes From Your Wrist. Healthline.com. April 19, 2022. Accessed August 2023. <https://www.healthline.com/diabetesmine/wrist-smartwatches-and-diabetes-tech>

#### The Mission of Diabetes Tech-up™

Diabetes Tech-up™ is sponsored by Novo Nordisk, a global leader in diabetes. We believe that adoption of innovative technologies can help appropriate patients better manage diabetes. Our goal is to help providers on the front line of diabetes care strengthen their understanding of diabetes technologies and implement them where they can have the greatest impact.



PLEASE DO NOT RESPOND TO THIS EMAIL. If you would like to contact us, please [click here](#) or call 1-877-744-2579.

#### UNSUBSCRIBE NOTICE

If you no longer want to receive communications from Novo Nordisk, [click here](#) to unsubscribe. You also may call us at 1-877-744-2579 or send us a letter that includes your full contact information (eg, name, email address, phone) to Novo Nordisk, 800 Scudders Mill Road, Plainsboro, New Jersey 08536. To better understand how Novo Nordisk values your privacy, see our [Privacy Statement](#).

Diabetes Tech-up™ is a trademark of Novo Nordisk A/S.  
Novo Nordisk is a registered trademark of Novo Nordisk A/S.  
© 2023 Novo Nordisk All rights reserved. US23DI00320 November 2023

