

Eight weird and wonderful smart things

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Published: July 25, 2014 - 12:05PM

Back in the internet's Paleolithic period – aka the late nineties – a joyride down the information superhighway meant logging on and browsing a few home pages or, for gamer types, bidding for something on eBay.

Fast forward 15 years and the 'internet of things' – where devices, not just people, connect to each other, is delivering a plethora of weird and wonderful gadgets that give a smart spin to everyday life – from smart soccer balls to a medical gadget designed to help strengthen women's pelvic floor.

Here are a few of them.

1. Train for the next FIFA World Cup

Caught World Cup fever and want to improve your backyard game? Adidas' miCoach smart ball comes with a built-in sensor which gives instant feedback on your kicking and striking skills to a smart ball app. Track your improvement over time by recording your stats and compare your top strikes with mates.

Launched in May, the ball comes with a battery life of 2000 kicks and a price tag of around \$US300 (\$318).

2. Move over Mary Poppins: connected umbrella

Besides protecting you from the elements, tomorrow's trusty broly should be able to help shield you from pollution, if the bright sparks at Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design have their way.

They're working on the sensing umbrella which can gather location-specific data on carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide levels in the atmosphere and share it with pollution data bases, via the (high-tech) cloud.

3. Shoulders back! Anti-slump device

Got posture that would make a sergeant major wince? You could consider putting in a pre-order for Lumo Lift – a \$US79 (\$84) chest device linked to a smartphone app which can measure the amount of time you spend with your shoulders back.

Program it to combat the slump by giving you "discreet vibratory feedback" every time you slouch.

4. Shared heartbeat for sleepless nights

Struggle to drop off when your amore is out of town? Would it help to listen to their heartbeat? Developed as a university project in 2010, Little Riot's Pillow Talk consists of matching wristbands to pick up each lover's pulse and a smartphone app to share them.

The company is planning a Kickstarter crowdsourcing campaign to fund the manufacturing process.

5. Open Sesame!

Got friends coming to stay but you'll be out when they arrive, or a cleaner who can't be trusted not to lose the keys? Forget leaving the spare set under the mat. The August Smart Lock system allows you to send visitors a virtual key, via their smartphone. Entry passes can be permanent or time limited, hotel style.

The lock itself can be retro-fitted to existing door furniture and will be available later this year for an introductory price of \$199.

6. Suck it up

Need to be careful coughing, laughing or picking up a skipping rope? Welcome to being a woman; a third of whom suffer from a degree of incontinence. Pelvic floor exercises can help but remembering to do them can be a problem. And how do you know you're doing them right? Analytica's PeriCoach will tell you.

The insertable device, developed by doctors, linked to an app, provides personalised exercise programs and monitors the strength of your squeezes. It costs \$US298 (\$316) for device plus 12 months subscription.

7. Animal, vegetable, mineral: find out what things are made of

Want to know if that bowl of fruit punch is packing a secret punch of its own or how much fat is in the salad dressing on the buffet? You'll be able to find out in an instant with the SCiO molecular analyser. The brainchild of Israeli firm Consumer Physics, it's a handheld sensor weighing just 20 grams which, linked to a smartphone app, can be used to identify the chemical composition of thousands of objects and materials.

Funded through Kickstarter, it's expected to ship in December for an unspecified price.

8. Where did I leave the keys again?

Spend your life looking for your keys, your phone, your wallet? You could try tagging them with a Tile – a tiny waterproof device that can be added to easily misplaced items and detected using the Tile app on an Apple device.

Tiles cost \$US19.95 (\$21) each, last a year and can be detected at a radius of around 40 metres. Up to eight Tiles can be linked to a single account.

What smart gadgets have crept into your life? Are there any that you would struggle to live without? Share them in the Comments.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/eight-weird-and-wonderful-smart-things-20140725-zvka8.html>