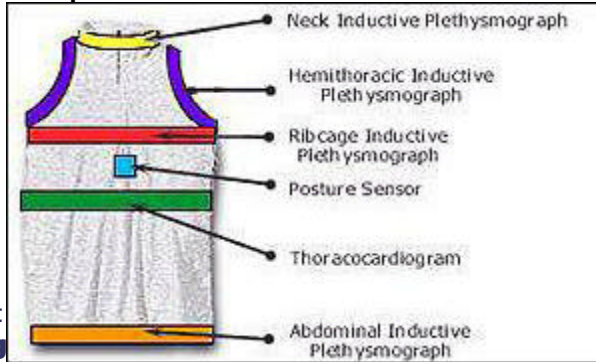


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Thursday, 9 December, 1999, 02:46 GMT

**Computerised shirt could save lives**

An artist's impression of the 'lifeshirt'

A shirt which monitors people's health while they go about their daily lives could give doctors more chance of spotting danger signs in patients.

The "lifeshirt" constantly records vital signs such as heart rate and breathing, passing the information to a hand-sized computer worn on the patient's belt.

The information collected is then passed via the internet to a secure website where data analysers can forward it to the person's doctor, warning of any changes in condition.

Manufacturers of the prototype shirt Lifeshirt.com, based in Ojai, California, say it can be worn while people are at work, playing sport or asleep.

As a result, it can give a more accurate picture of people's health than recordings taken during brief visits to a doctor or at home.

"We can look at what is going on when you are at work in a stressful situation rather than when you are sitting at home in a relaxed

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environment," said inventor Dr Marvin Sackner.

The shirt, which contains six sensors positioned from the neck to the abdomen and weighs about the same as normal clothing, is due to go on general sale in September next year.

“  
**The lifeshirt provides a movie of a patient's health that supplements the snapshot of a standard office exam**  
”  
Paul Kennedy

It will originally cost US\$250 including the computer handset, plus US\$30 a day monitoring costs.

Company president Paul Kennedy said: "The lifeshirt provides a movie of a patient's health that supplements the snapshot of a standard office exam.

### **Accurate diagnosis**

"It gives physicians vital information to aid in accurate diagnosis for critical decisions and early preventive care."

Andrew Behar, co-founder of Lifeshirt.com, added: "If you are on the golf course and you feel a bit breathless, you can pull out the handset. It is truly 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Its potential uses include post-operative monitoring, pain management and the avoidance of misdiagnoses. It can show up cases of sleep apnea, where people stop breathing many times during a night's sleep, which might otherwise be missed.

It capitalises on equipment used for years in intensive care units that, with technological advances, can now be included in the fabric of the shirt.

Dr Simon Fradd, deputy chairman of the British Medical Association's committee for GPs, said: "This is the way the future is likely to go. It isn't going to take 50 years - within 10 years we will have people who are at risk wearing these kind of things."

But he warned stringent steps would have to be taken to ensure the security of information being passed via the internet and that patient confidentiality was not being breached.

"We need to find a way of handling data to make sure it is safe," he said.

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