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Technology helps monitor glucose levels

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By Lauren Pitman

AFTER more than three decades of living with diabetes, a North-east mum has been given a new lease of life thanks to technology.

For 52-year-old former lifeguard Marie Cowie from Findochty, managing her diabetes has been a way of life for more than 33 years. Now, thanks to a new device, she can monitor her condition more effectively than ever before.

The device is called the **Mendor Discreet** blood glucose monitor. It allows her to check her glucose levels on the go in as little as 20 seconds – and she is so grateful for it.

"I wish I'd had it when I was a lifeguard," said Marie, whose son Liam has also been

diagnosed with diabetes. "It's just magic. You can pop it in your handbag and take it out with you wherever you're going. It just looks like a mobile phone, so people don't know what it is and it means you don't get embarrassed if you need to monitor in public."

There are 2.9 million people diagnosed with diabetes in the UK and an estimated 850,000 people who have the condition but don't know it. Fewer than one in five

people with diabetes have achieved the recommended levels for blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol. Failure to keep levels within medically recommended limits can

potentially lead to long-term health problems, such as heart failure, blindness and even death.

It is estimated that up to 24,000 people die annually from causes that could be avoided through better management of the condition. Marie was diagnosed with type one diabetes at the age of just 19, the same age that Liam, now 21, discovered he had the condition.

"I didn't know anything about diabetes but looking back I had the classic symptoms of weight loss, constantly feeling thirsty and needing the loo all the time," Marie said.

"But it was the pain of cramping that made me go to the doctors and I did a urine sample.

"That night my GP came round and told me I had diabetes. It was



devastating, a complete shock.

"They took me into hospital for a week and I had my first insulin injection. I can remember instantly feeling refreshed, that awful thirst had gone."

Living in Findochty with Liam and her husband Neil, Marie has to monitor her blood glucose levels four to five times a day. For many,

checking blood glucose levels can involve carrying round a kit in a case and could see the person have to stop to organise the component parts before performing the check. The Mendor Discreet blood glucose monitor requires none of this. Marie can simply take it out of her handbag and 20 seconds later the checks are complete. It is designed for those people with diabetes who like to lead busy, full lives.

The monitor is ideal for people with on-the-go jobs, young people and families, those involved in sporting, social and outdoor activities, or workers in large open-place offices with little or no privacy – it would have been ideal for Marie in her former job as a lifeguard and mum of two.

"Having diabetes is life changing," she said.

"Especially when I was a teenager wanting to go out and have fun.

"Back then, you had to constantly watch what you were eating or drinking and monitor yourself – you couldn't go out. Thankfully it is so much easier now."

Marie added: "I've had a couple of bad scares.

"Once I fell down the stairs at 2.30 in the morning and the next thing I knew I was waking up in hospital – I'd lost days.

"That shook me up and I am religious about monitoring

my blood levels now."



TECHNOLOGY: The Mendor Discreet blood glucose monitor.



CHECKS: Marie Cowie manages her diabetes with a new monitor.