Would these “smart” ice cubes change how you drink?

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Sometimes great technology comes out of bad life experiences. Like the time Dhairya Dand from MIT Media Lab was so intoxicated he blacked out and came up with an idea for a technology that would prevent people from drinking too much.

By placing a smart LED inside molds of waterproof, edible jelly, Dand was able to create a “smart” ice cube that can track how much alcohol you’ve been drinking. The LEDs, which pulse in time with ambient music, use a ATtiny microcontroller, IR transceivers, and coin cell battery to track the amount of sips taken over a period of time, making a rough calculation of how intoxicated you are. Like a drunken traffic light, the cubes will slowly change from green to orange to red indicating an increasing amount of alcohol in your system. Not only would this help limit quantity of alcohol you’re consuming, it also serves as a literal red light if you’re drinking too fast, which can be an accidental byproduct of talking while drinking.

If you choose to ignore your friendly ice-cube warning, the cubes will use your smartphone to send a text to a friend, letting them know you’re going to need a ride and probably a trough of coffee. The text message can say anything, but a simple “Drank too much. Can you take me home?” will probably work.

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