

WELCOA Special Report

16 Ways To Protect You, Your Loved Ones And Your Employees From The Potentially Harmful Effects Of Cell Phones

NOTE: This list is compiled from advice given in Devra Davis' book, "Disconnect," and Ronald B. Herberman's Memorandum to University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute employees entitled: "Important Precautionary Advice Regarding Cell Phone Use."

With new evidence pointing to the risks of cell phone use and its negative impact on human health and safety, WELCOA has pulled together these practical tips for safe cell phone use from two National experts in the field. This list of safe cell phone guidelines is designed to help you, your employees and their families limit their exposure to the potentially harmful electromagnetic radiation that's emitted from cell phones.

Although the evidence is still far from conclusive, many highly-accredited scientists and health professionals believe that the health-risk data on cell phone use is now sufficient enough to alert the public to the possibility of harm—especially since simple and practical measures like these can be taken to continue using cell phones while substantially reducing the potential risks.

Here Are The Top 16 Tips For Safe Cell Phone Use:

1. Keep Cell Phones Away From Children

Do not allow children to use a cell phone, except for emergencies. The developing organs of a fetus or child are the most likely to be sensitive to any possible effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields. Do not speak on the phone or text while holding the device near a pregnant woman's abdomen or a baby's head and do not point the back of the phone where the antennas are located toward a child. Tweens and teens should not sleep with cell phones on or under pillows or next to the bed all night.

2. Put It On Speaker

Whenever possible, use the speaker-phone mode with the phone held a hand's distance away. This will reduce your exposure to radiation, as your exposure drops more than exponentially as you move the phone away from your head. Even when using the speaker, hold the phone away from your torso when you are talking and be sure that the back of the phone is not close to others, especially nursing infants or other children.

3. Use A Headset

Use a headset or a wireless headphone with a low power Bluetooth emitter, which has less than 1/100th of the electromagnetic emission of a normal cell phone. Using a headset reduces the amount of radiation to the brain. Do not keep a wireless headset turned on in your ear or in your pocket when not in use.

4. Don't Drive While Using Your Cell

Avoid using a cell phone or texting while driving. It's like driving drunk.



5. Limit Second-Hand Exposure

Avoid using your cell phone in places, like a bus, where you can passively expose others to your phone's electromagnetic fields. Do not point the back of the phone where the antennas are located toward a child.

6. Use A Landline For Long Conversations

Only use your cell phone to establish contact or for conversations lasting a few minutes, as the effects on the body are directly related to the length of exposure. For longer conversations, use a landline at home and not a cordless phone, as these emit radio frequency radiation like that of cell phones. (Having a landline also means you will have a working phone if and when electricity is cut off during blackouts or if cell towers are not working).

7. Hold The Cell Phone Away From Your Body

While communicating using your cell phone, try to keep the cell phone away from the body as much as possible. Even a distance of two inches cuts the strength of exposure—you don't have to keep the phone very far away to reduce your exposure by a thousand or even ten thousand times. Before putting your cell phone to your ear, wait until your correspondent has picked up. This limits the power of the electromagnetic field emitted near your ear and the duration of your exposure. Switch sides regularly while communicating on your cell phone to spread out your exposure.



8. Only Use Your Phone When It Has A Strong Signal

Whenever possible, only use your phone when the signal quality is good. When the signal is weak or when moving at high speed, such as in a car or train, this automatically increases power to a maximum as the phone repeatedly attempts to connect to a new relay antenna. The weaker the signal, the more the radio frequency has to boost itself to get connected, increasing your exposure.

9. Don't Keep Your Phone On You

Do not keep a phone turned on next to your body all day—turn it off if you wear it on your waist or in your pocket. But, if you must keep it on, face the front of the phone (the keypad) toward your body, as the antennas are at the back. (Depending on the thickness of the phone, this may provide a minimal reduction of exposure). When you are not using the phone, if it is on, stow it in a backpack, purse, or bag. You can also put it on "flight" or "off-line" mode, which stops electromagnetic emissions.



10. Don't Keep Your Phone By Your Bed

Do not keep it near your body at night such as under the pillow or on a bedside table, particularly if you are pregnant.

11. Use Caution With Cell Phones If You Are Pregnant

Pregnant women should keep their cell phone away from their abdomen. New mothers should also protect their babies from the phone. Do not speak on the phone or text while holding the device near the abdomen or the baby's head and do not point the back of the phone where the antennas are located toward child. A fetus's or baby's developing brain is most susceptible to radiation.

12. Men—Don't Keep It In Your Pocket

Men, especially those trying to become fathers, should also keep their cell phones turned off when in their pockets.

13. Text Whenever Possible

When possible, communicate via text messaging rather than making a call, limiting the duration of exposure and the proximity to the body. Hold the phone away from your body in your hands or on some kind of barrier, a book for example, in your lap. Phones use less radiation to send text than to speak, and texting keeps radiation away from your head.

14. Beware Of Radiation Shields

Be wary of radiation shields and other such protective devices that are claimed to limit exposure to radiation. They may reduce the connection quality and therefore force the phone to transmit at a higher output power.

15. Choose A Low-SAR Rating

Choose a device with the lowest SAR possible (SAR = Specific Absorption Rate, which is a measure of the strength of the magnetic field absorbed by the body). SAR ratings of contemporary phones by different manufacturers are available by searching for "sar ratings cell phones" on the internet.

16. Read Your User Manual And Take Precautions

Read your user guides and the FCC and company manufacturer Web sites. Most of the current user guides provide information about safe distances for phone use in nearly unreadable, small print in the user manuals. The FCC lists precautions on its Web site at: www.fcc.gov/cgb/cellular.html.

Sources:

1. "Tumors and Cell Phone Use: What The Science Says" Statement of Ronald B. Herberman, MD before the Domestic Policy Subcommittee of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee on Thursday, September 25, 2008. Dr. Herberman's full testimony is available at: http://cellphones.procon.org/sourcefiles/Herberman_Testimony.pdf
2. "Disconnect" by Devra Davis PhD, MPH. Copyright 2010. Dutton Publishing, New York, NY. (See Appendix, page 245: How To Protect Yourself And Your Family.) For more resources from Devra Davis, visit: <http://www.environmentalhealthtrust.org/>

