

Are Cell Phones Safe?



Questions about how cell phones might impact our health have sparked significant controversy. The World Health Organization International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has now classified radio frequency electromagnetic fields as possibly carcinogenic to humans, based on an increased risk for glioma, a malignant type of brain cancer associated with wireless phone use.

Caution was also urged in an article about cell phone safety published this past October in the journal *Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine*. It reported that cell phones that are switched on and carried in shirt or pants pockets can exceed U.S. Federal Communications Commission exposure guidelines, and also that adults and children absorb high levels of microwave radiation from the phones. According to the paper, children are at greater risk than adults, absorbing up to triple the amount of microwave radiation in their brain's hypothalamus (which links the nervous and endocrine systems) and hippocampus (vital for memory and spatial navigation) compared to adults. Absorption into their eyes was also greater, and as much as 10 times higher in their bone marrow than adults'.

The IARC concludes that these findings call for cell phone certification consistent with the "as low as reasonably achievable" approach taken in setting standards for using radiological devices. "It is important that additional research be conducted into the long-term, heavy use of mobile phones," says IARC Director Christopher Wild. "Pending the availability of such information, it is important to take pragmatic measures to reduce exposure [directly to the head], such as hands-free devices or texting."

Additional resource: Epidemiologist Devra Davis, Ph.D., reports on this topic in Disconnect: The Truth About Cell Phone Radiation.

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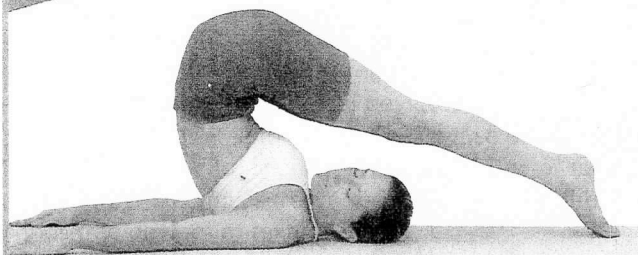


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