



Cell Phone Update:

The Buzz continues

The Environmental Working Group just released a report that ranks cell phones by the watts per kilogram of radiation they put out. This month, lawmakers in Washington, D.C., heard from scientists about the long-debated link between cell phone radiation and some forms of cancer.

The Federal Communications Commission, Food and Drug Administration, American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute all say there is no proven health risk posed by cell phones. In 2003, an extensive FDA study concluded that “the weight of scientific evidence has not linked cell phones with any health problems.”

The Environmental Working Group, however, cautions that the FDA and other agencies relied on short-term studies that looked at risks over a three-year span.

“It is not conclusive,” said Nuka Leiba, a researcher for the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit group. “We think further research needs to be done. And until it is conclusive, we feel like people should use a precautionary principle.”

By law, cell phone manufacturers must list the wattage of the phone somewhere inside the packaging, and consumers can look it up on a FCC Web site by consulting an FCC identification sticker located underneath the battery of the phone.

The Environmental Working Group wants manufacturers to display the radiation values

on the box, “so that people can know what it is before they buy a phone,” Leiba said. “Right now you have to buy the phone first.”

The Cellular Telephone Industry Association said it relies on the views of impartial health organizations.

The Environmental Working Group also wants the FCC to revise its radiation wattage standards, which were put in place in 1992, when far fewer children were using cell phones. Some scientists believe children are at greater risk than adults from low-level radiation.

Today, about 70 percent of children 12 to 17 use cell phones daily, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

The Environmental Working Group said basic precautions like using hands-free headsets and texting more than talking are already being used.

“We don’t want to put a doomsday attitude out there, because we’re still using our cell phones,” Leiba said. “But we want people to be aware that new science is out there, and it is raising some issues. And with consumer awareness will come more studies.”





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To see where your cellphone is on the list of Best and Worst Phones Go to: www.ewg.org/cellphoneradiation/Get-a-Safer-Phone

To be on the safe side, follow the tips below to reduce exposures.

1. Buy a low radiation phone

Look up your phone on EWG's buyer's guide: www.ewg.org/cellphoneradiation/Get-a-Safer-Phone. (Your phone's model number may be printed under your battery.) Consider replacing your phone with one that emits the lowest radiation possible and still meets your needs.

2. Use a headset or speaker

Headsets emit much less radiation than phones. Choose either wired or wireless (experts are split on which version is safer): www.ewg.org/cellphoneradiation/Get-a-Headset. Some wireless headsets emit continuous, low-level radiation, so take yours off your ear when you're not on a call. Using your phone in speaker mode also reduces radiation to the head.

3. Listen more, talk less

Your phone emits radiation when you talk or text, but not when you're receiving messages. Listening more and talking less reduces your exposures.

4. Hold phone away from your body

Hold the phone away from your torso when you're talking (with headset or speaker), not against your ear, in a pocket, or on your belt where soft body tissues absorb radiation.

5. Choose texting over talking

Phones use less power (less radiation) to send text than voice. And unlike when you speak with the phone at your ear, texting keeps radiation away from your head.

6. Poor Signal? Stay off the phone

Fewer signal bars on your phone means that it emits more radiation to get the signal to the tower. Make and take calls when your phone has a strong signal.

7. Limit children's phone use

Young children's brains absorb twice the cell phone radiation as an adult's. EWG joins health agencies in at least 6 countries in recommending limits for children's phone use, such as for emergency situations only.