

Payphones do not cause cancer: Study. By Dr. Germaine Meusseure.

While a fair amount of skepticism exists on the many health issues related to cell phone use, one thing that consumers can fully rely on is the safety of a payphone; not only because of the privacy they create, but more importantly because there are no dangers to your neurological health.

Many contemporary communication technologies emit radio waves and EMF (electro magnetic field) disturbances. The effects of this invisible static are currently being measured. The World Health Organization expects to make official recommendations about mobile phones in October 2009.



Some problems that could arise include radio waves being absorbed by your head (affecting your brain and other neroseensors) and microwave radiation causing any dielectric material (such as living tissue) to become heated, and as such, changed. This can lead to symptoms as simple as headaches, fatigue and dizziness, and some studies even conclude that the use of cell phones can increase the risk of cancer.¹ Other physio-social risks involved with cell phone use include irregular sleep patterns, memory loss, and general irritability.

Ronald Herberman, director of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute one of the top US cancer research centers said that [studies] claiming that there is no link between cell phones and brain tumours are outdated, have methodological concerns and did not include sufficient numbers of long-term cell phone users. One such study considered using a cell phone once a week qualified as frequent. "That's a ridiculous study," exclaims Dr. Devra Davis, referring specifically to the Danish Cancer Study. "Anybody who used a cell phone for work was kicked out of the study, which is crazy, because those are the highest users." Skewed measurements like this are misleading the consumer into thinking this medium is safe.

¹ Biological Effects of Radiofrequency Fields: Does Modulation Matter?, Foster et al., Radiation Research, 162(2):219–225, August 2004. at <http://www.bioone.org/bioone/?request=get-abstract&issn=0033-7587&volume=162&issue=02&page=0219>

Complexity with Complexion

While some of these dangers are invisible, some very apparent problems do arise even just holding a cell phone. Earlier this year Lionel Bercovitch of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island and colleagues tested 22 popular handsets from eight different manufacturers and found nickel in 10 of the devices.² Nickel is a common irritant and can provoke unsightly rashes, irritation, and other skin problems³

Anti-social behaviour

Lack of courtesy has been associated with many cell phone user behavioural trends, and what is further frightening is that using cell phones may create hereditary trends. A study from May 2008 found that mothers who used cellular handsets were 54 per cent more likely to have children with behavioural problems and that likelihood increased with the amount of potential exposure to the radiation. When these children later became cell phone users themselves, they were 80 per cent more likely to suffer from difficulties with behaviour. Further, many of these children are 25 percent more at risk to develop emotional problems, 34 per cent more likely to experience difficulty relating to peers and cooperating with colleagues, 35 per cent more likely to be hyperactive, and 49 per cent more prone to problems with conduct.⁴

These findings are especially distressing, considering that cell phones are the primary communication technology for persons under 16, and this age is still a significant period of cognitive development. The percentage of teens that own cell phones is 73%. Dr. Davis further illustrates how regressive our cell phone communications policies are in comparison to other nations: "In Bangalore, India, and in Scandinavia, they recommend that children not use cell phones. It's illegal to sell a cell phone to someone under the age of 16 in Bangalore, India."

Despite the negotiable convenience of a mobile phone, it is becoming more apparent this convenience comes with some undeniable risks. There are no reported cases of parents needing to take away their child's payphone, and many health practitioners and scientists are arguing it's healthier and safer to stop, pull out a quarter and use a payphone. Despite this, many feel payphones are surrounded by a social stigma, and yet, they pose little-to-no risk to your physical and mental health. The risks involved with using a payphone are the same risks you take holding the bars on a streetcar or

2 "Doctors warn of rash from mobile phone use" Reuters.com, Retrieved October 17, 2008

3 "Cell phone making you itch? Nickel Allergy may prompt skin rash in some cell phone users" Miranda Hitti. WebMD.com October 17 2008. <http://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/news/20081017/cell-phone-skin-rash-tied-to-nickel>

4 UCLA based study. <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-wellbeing/health-news/warning-using-a-mobile-phone-while-pregnant-can-seriously-damage-your-baby-830352.html>

pressing an elevator button, says Dr. John Scully. As long as someone uses the same common sense they do in the rest of their daily lives, they should never experience an illness directly caused by payphone use.

Payphones as essential service

To fully illustrate the effects of cell phone use, Dr. Davis elaborates what is actually happening when you put a cell phone to your ear:

A cell phone is a microwave, and basically the reason your ear gets hot is that you're warming it with a microwave. You like cooking your brain? How would you like to cook the brain of your child? We're not cannibals. We shouldn't be doing that.

It has always been the Bell Payphone Labs mandate to keep their clients overall well-being at the forefront of their experiments. While many cell phone manufacturers argue that payphones and cell phones are part of a symbiotic relationship, it seems pretty clear that if health and safety are a concern, cell phones should not be considered at all. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has been taking steps to make sure pay phones will always be available to those who need them. After hearing from the public including submissions from telecommunications companies and public interest advocates - the CRTC has decided that payphones are an essential service for Canadians.