

Ring! Hello, It's Radiation

By Editorial Staff

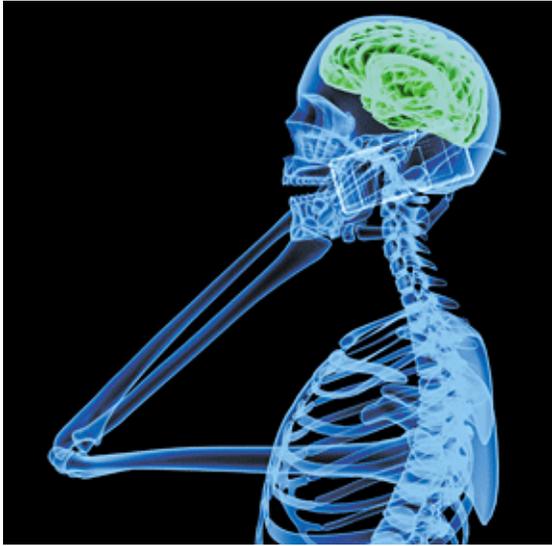
For the past few years, we have been hearing conflicting reports about cell phone use and potential radiation exposure. Numerous studies have been released – some saying there is no need for concern, with others warning there could be serious health risks with prolonged use.

The World Health Organization (WHO) stepped up this year to set the record straight by issuing a statement letting consumers know radiation from cell phones can possibly cause cancer after all. The risk of exposure even led the agency to list mobile phone use in the same "carcinogenic hazard" category as lead, engine exhaust and chloroform.

So, how did the WHO come to this conclusion? It turns out after reviewing peer-reviewed studies on cell phone safety, a team of 31 scientists from 14 countries, including the United States, made the decision to alert the public – in part because the team found enough evidence to categorize personal exposure as "possibly carcinogenic to humans." They also found evidence that there could be an increase in several types of brain cancer.

Studies are ongoing to more fully assess the potential long-term effects of mobile phone use. The WHO has said it will conduct a formal risk assessment by 2012.

What precautions should you take when using your cell phone? Luckily, manufacturers of many popular cell phones have already warned consumers to keep the device away from their body to avoid high levels of radiation from being absorbed. They have posted alerts on packaging and in many retail stores. There has also been a focus on children who use cell phones. Some experts have noted that children are more susceptible to radiation due to their fragile, growing tissues.



To ensure that your exposure to radiation is minimized

while using your cell phone, it's ultimately up to you – the consumer – to take preventive steps. Here are few:

Use Your Speaker Phone / Ear Piece – Doing so will allow you to keep the phone away from your body and head as much as possible, minimizing exposure to radiation.

Do More Texting – Texting is one of the best ways to communicate using your phone without having the phone near your ear (and brain) all the time.

Ask the Experts – The WHO provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding radiation and cell phone use on its Web site, www.who.int. Check the site for continuous updates on this important public-health issue.



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