



Health Effects of Wireless Technology

A newsletter from Gail Eastwood, MSW, DIHom

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Are There Health Risks in New Technology?

Suppose there was a new chemical with many uses that you could introduce into your home and workplace. Suppose the chemical is useful and convenient, but with numerous disturbing research reports and personal observations about possible toxic effects on some people. Suppose the research is said to be “inconclusive,” with numerous governmental and non-governmental spokespersons recommending more research be undertaken. Do you welcome this chemical into your life on a 24/7 basis, or do you decide to wait until more definitive long term research clarifies the situation? This is approximately where we stand with electromagnetic radiation (EMR) in the form of cordless phones, wireless internet and cellphones. The only difference in the case of this new EMR technology is that some of the choices may already have been made for you

Take, for example, the situation of beautiful downtown Garberville. This spring, I became aware that some unknown factor in my Garberville office was now and then interfering with accurate muscle testing for food and environmental intolerances. It turns out that in the last year, the presence of wireless internet in my Dancing Cranes office had mushroomed. I can now pick up at least six wireless networks in this space that faces the town square. Walking around town with my netbook, I discovered that most locations on our main street, Redwood Drive, also register at least six networks.

During the course of this same year, I was also mystified by problems that didn't correct as expected with appropriate therapies—problems as disparate as high blood pressure, digestive disturbances, flagging energy, disturbed sleep and mood. I started to muscle test the effects of wireless internet, cordless phones and cellphones on the circulation of energy in people's bodies. I discovered a wide range of sensitivity to these radio waves as registered in muscle testing, which tests for presence or absence of micro-charges of electricity in body circuits. People with marked sensitivity have reported to me dramatic improvement in symptoms from going back to corded phones and wired internet.

These observations are confirmed by observations of others worldwide. Sensitive individuals have, since the introduction of this new EMR technology, reported symptoms from exposure, including sleep disturbance, tiredness, depression, headaches, restlessness, irritability, concentration problems, forgetfulness, learning difficulties, frequent infections, blood pressure changes, limb and joint pains, numbness or tingling sensations, tinnitus, hearing loss, impaired balance, giddiness and eye problems. The syndrome of symptoms that respond to reduction in exposure to proliferating electromagnetic fields and electromagnetic radiation has been called “electromagnetic sensitivity”. PowerWatch, a British nonprofit focusing on possible EMR health effects, concludes that “as many as 5% of people could be affected by this syndrome, and a fraction of a percent affected to quite severe degrees.” Enough evidence exists, documented in 2000 studies, to support suspicion and caution about adverse health effects of the new EMR technology. However, the jury is still out on firmly establishing negative health consequences of

exposure to the new technology (just as was the case for cigarette smoke fifty years ago). In the meantime, the significant number of people who are registering short term effects could be the “canaries in the mine,” giving warning to the rest of us, as we contemplate what the long term health effects might be.

So what does research on long term effects say about cordless phones, cellphones, and wireless internet? Lennart Hardell’s studies of cellphone and cordless phone users found that long term users of cellphones and cordless phones (10 years or more, half hour daily or more) were statistically more likely to have brain tumors, especially on the side that they usually listened on. There are no long term studies of the effects of wireless internet—it hasn’t been around long enough to generate such studies! Unlike the case of cigarettes, we can expect no unclouded studies to emerge in the next ten to twenty years, because the technology is being adopted on such a widespread basis that it will be impossible to create a control group of unexposed individuals to compare with people who have long term exposure. You can read more about the disturbing research to date at www.powerwatch.org.

Based on the scientific uncertainty about reported harmful effects, some people are proposing restrictions. Government officials in a number of European countries are issuing warnings to limit use and exposure, and are seeking more research and reviews of existing research on the long-term health impact of exposure to wireless networks and mobile telephones. In the United States, however, by contrast to the more conservative approach of European bodies, our Center for Disease Control (CDC), doesn’t even mention wireless internet, cordless phones or electromagnetic sensitivity on their website. They do take a position on the harmlessness of cellphones, “although,” they say, “some studies have raised concerns.”

What can you do if you want to limit your exposure until “further research” clarifies the choices?

- 1. Return to corded phones. At the least, reduce your exposure level.** Both the cordless phone base unit and the handset emit radio waves. Unless you have one of the older 900MHz phones (modern phones are more powerful), your “mother” base unit emits radio waves constantly; the handset does so when in use. (The “daughter” basesets for extra phones are chargers only, and don’t themselves emit radio waves.) Don’t keep the mother unit next to your bed or in other areas you work or relax in a lot.
- 2. Disable your wireless router and return to wired internet. At least, turn it off when not in use, especially at night.**
- 3. Turn off your cellphone when not in use, and restrict your use.** Use the speakerphone feature or an airtube headset (sold at Organic Grace) to reduce exposure.
- 4. Restrict children’s exposure to this new technology.** Research on cellphones shows that the radiation is absorbed more deeply into the developing brains of children. This likely applies to cordless phones as well, so it seems especially important to provide corded phones for children, and to strictly limit their use of cellphones. This goes for teenagers and young adults too--the brain continues to develop until age 24!

I’m interested in your experiences around this issue. Contact me, or drop by my Dancing Cranes office during my 12-1 lunch hour on Fridays to share information and ask questions together.

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