

The Green Notebook

Cell phone dangers

Cell phones have permeated every corner of our modern society—a worldwide phenomenon that is pretty much taken for granted these days. I mean, what would you do without your cell phone? People around the world have embraced the technology, from developed to even undeveloped countries.

I was intrigued by a recent article on the Grist.org , an environmental news and green living tips website. In their Ask Um bra (Fiske) column, she covered the issue of whether cell phones are safe to use. This is a question I have been really struggling with myself. Here is a summary of what she found out.

While it's already been proven and is just common sense that cell phones are a major distraction while driving, what about the health impact of long-term use? Fiske points out that, while more complex to prove, dangers of cell phone usage are a big debate.

Start with the phones instruction manual where you may find a warning similar to this one buried in the fine print: "When using the iPhone near your body for voice calls, keep it at least 5/8 of an inch away from your body." Hmm... Why?

Cell phones emit microwave radiation and, when held up to your head, your brain absorbs radio frequency radiation which can damage DNA. Small adults and children absorb more radiation than the average person. So, is there a real problem with these levels? Fiske quotes Dr. Devra Davis, founding director of the toxicology and environmental studies board at the U.S. National Academy of Sciences:

" Everything is fine until we have incontrovertible proof that it is not. Yes, we do not have an epidemic of brain tumors in countries that have used cell phones heavily for little more than a decade. But 10 years after cigarettes began to be heavily smoked, we also did not have an epidemic of lung cancer."

Truly, because this is a new technology, the effects over a lifetime are not known. I'll keep my eyes and ears open for any further reports but in the meantime the best advice I could find was limit use for young ones and for us adults...well the verdict is still out.

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