

Cell Phones: Ways to Protect Yourself

The Green Notebook

Since cell phones have permeated our lives, it makes sense to consider some ways to protect yourself from potential harms from radio-frequency radiation emitted by the devices. Excerpted from an article in the January/February 2011 issue of *Green American* in an article by Victoria Kreha, I found the following safety tips:

- Always use a hands-free headset or the speakerphone when talking on your cell phone. Quite simply that is the best way to protect yourself.
- Keep the phone off your body. Carry your phone in your purse or a bag with the antenna (back of the phone) pointed away from you. Don't carry it right in your pocket.
- Text instead of talking. Holding your cell phone away from your head to send text messages exposes you to less radiation.
- Turn it off. Phones only emit radio-frequency radiation when they're searching for or receiving a signal, so a phone that's off or in "airplane mode" is safe.
- Replace cordless phones with corded models. Cordless phones can emit as much radiation as cell phones and the charging station constantly emits radiation.
- Use a low-radiating cell phone. Search FCC.gov/cgb/sar to find the specific absorbency rate (SAR) of your cell phone or consult the Environmental Working Group's online database: EWG.org/cellphones. Even with a low SAR rating phone, it is still important to keep it away from your head and body when possible.
- Keep your phone fully charged. When a cell phone's signal strength is weak, it has to work harder—and emit more radiation.
- Don't give cell phones to young children as toys or pacifiers. Enough said. If they are playing a game on it every now and then, put it in "airplane mode" so it isn't searching for a signal.
- Take care with older children. Children are more susceptible to potential harm from radio-frequency radiation than adults. If you do give them a phone for safety reasons, also give them a headset and encourage them to text or use speakerphone instead of putting the phone close to their heads.

I hope you found this information as helpful as I have. I plan to make some changes to the way I use my cell phone and will have my teenagers read take precautions as well. Remember the old adage: better safe than sorry.

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