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Mobile Phone Safety Tips & Cyberbullying Information

P&C Committee - Mobile Phone Safety Tips & Cyberbullying Information

Without doubt mobile phones are very useful devices. The P&C have paid due attention to the substantial evidence that has emerged over recent years indicating that their use must be controlled – more importantly in children. It is clear that we must train ourselves to become smart users of our “smartphones” in particular, in order to minimise the negative side effects associated with them. For example, the addictive behaviour is a risk to children and adolescents which gets in the way of learning and socialising.

SAFETY FIRST

We are concerned about the emerging evidence for adverse effects of mobile phones on children’s mental and physical health. When reputable scientific bodies have issued warnings and government health agencies of some other countries have already started awareness-raising campaigns/taken measures (**please see appendix for full details**) to reduce children’s exposure to microwave radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation (RF-EMR) from mobile phones and other wireless devices, it is clearly prudent to follow the **Precautionary Principle** to protect children.

Fact – wireless devices including mobile phones emit microwave radiation (RF-EMR). Human exposure to RF-EMR has increased by more than a billion-fold over the last few decades. Recent scientific evidence has confirmed that currently permitted levels of RF-EMR can cause various effects on living cells including damaging DNA (e.g. National Toxicology Program (NTP) of the USA).

The following points are shared in the hope of encouraging safer and more responsible use of mobile phones by students. The **Precautionary Principle** should be instituted when using a mobile phone or any wireless device. Note there is no proof of safety with these devices.

1. Mobile phones were first introduced without any pre market testing for safety. Mobile phones emit **Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR)** and EMR has been classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a 2B Possible Carcinogen..
2. Have you read the fine print? That is, every phone comes with a legal disclaimer warning that the mobile is not meant to be placed directly against the head or the body. Use speaker phone instead.
3. Mobile phones should not be placed on your person or in pockets. Studies showing reduced fertility and damaged sperm have been demonstrated when mobiles are placed in pockets or against the body.
4. Airplane Mode is your new best friend because it stops the mobile emitting EMR. Always check that Wi-Fi/Blue Tooth are turned off as well for complete protection.
5. If the phone is turned into silent mode it will still be emitting EMR. Only Airplane Mode and disabling wireless and/or completely turning off your phone will stop the EMR.
6. Consider turning your mobile on only when you need to make call and consider the use of air tube headsets to assist with exposure minimisation.
7. Mobile Phones have no place in bedrooms and should not be left on at night. If a mobile is on, it continually and periodically checks for the closest mobile phone tower and this process creates microwave radiation or EMR.
8. Mobile phone chargers also emit magnetic fields and should not be placed in bedrooms or near where people spend lots of time.
9. Mobile devices should be switched off in cars, buses and all forms of public transport. The metal in the vehicle means it is more difficult for the signal to escape the vehicle and higher levels of radiation result for all passengers. This situation is the same for travelling in lifts.
10. Learner drivers and P1 drivers and riders are not permitted to use a mobile phone at all while driving or riding in a vehicle. This is law in Australia.
11. Consider texting rather than phoning and note you can send several texts in Airplane Mode so that when typing the text you are not exposed to radiation. Then simply turn your phone on and let the message(s) transmit.
12. When playing games on your mobile or listening to music it is essential to use Airplane Mode (see point 4).
13. All wireless laptops and tablets emit EMR. When internet access is not required, they should be switched into Airplane Mode (see point 4).

An excellent book for further reference is Wise Wireless Kids by Lyn McLean from EMR Australia. This book discusses safer ways to use mobile and wireless technology and it suitable for 5 years plus.

Further information for critical evaluation:

<https://www.powerwatch.org.uk/> 

<http://www.wiredchild.org/> 

<http://www.safeinschool.org/> 

<https://emfscientist.org/> 

<https://ehtrust.org/> 

<https://www.emfacts.com/> 

<http://www.emraustralia.com.au/> 


<http://www.wifiinschools.com/index.html> 


<http://c4st.org/> 

<https://magdahavas.com/> 

TAKING CONTROL OF TECHNOLOGY & CYBER SAFETY

It is imperative that students are in control of technology as opposed to the other way around. The following suggestions are given so that students are fully aware of the risks as perpetrators of cyberbullying or indeed as victims. The following points will assist to encourage responsible mobile phone use and device use generally.

1. Do not break the law. Children must be over 13 years of age to have a Facebook account.
2. Whatever is put on social networking sites or the internet can remain there forever. That is, much of this information becomes public. This information has the potential to disqualify students from future employment or relationships.
3. An inappropriate photograph shared with others has the potential to breach privacy laws.
4. Be aware of the dangers associated with sexting because it can lead to charges of distributing pornographic material.
5. Be aware of peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing so as not to breach copyright laws.
6. Creating viruses and hacking are illegal and litigation may result.
7. It is illegal to text whilst driving and it can lead to more car accidents.
8. Record your 15 digit International Mobile Equipment Identity number (IMEI) in case your phone is lost or stolen. If it is stolen go to www.lost.amta.org.au  and notify the police.
9. Ensure your privacy settings are set correctly so that you are not sharing personal files with inappropriate people.
10. Keep passwords private and change your password often ensuring it is not an obvious password.
11. Do not use mobiles or other devices when completing school work – instead turn the device off or in Airplane Mode.

- 12.** Parents may consider parental controls wherein inappropriate sites are limited.
- 13.** Consider putting an in case of emergency (ICE) contact on your phone so if you are in an accident others can contact your preferred ICE person.
- 14.** When it comes to social networking do not 'friend' just anyone. Online people are not always who they say they are and many people may be grooming children and are predators. Mobile phones can steal your time and divert your attention from other worthwhile pursuits. Mobiles are a big distraction.
- 15.** Mobile phones can steal your time and divert your attention from other worthwhile pursuits. Mobiles are a big distraction.
- 16.** Be aware that social networking can make the grass greener on the other side – for example many people go to great lengths to make their life look the best posting all sorts of photos etc. This is not reality.
- 17.** If you are addicted to online gaming seek help.
- 18.** FOMO (fear of missing out) and nomophobia (no mobile phone phobia) are increasing. Seek help if impacted.
- 19.** Steer clear of online porn, gambling, gaming and rip-offs.
- 20.** Don't buy items online before investigating how much things cost.
- 21.** If travelling overseas beware that huge fees can result if 'data roaming' is not turned off.
- 22.** Beware that not all places encourage mobile use, for example hospitals because it might interfere with medical equipment. Be sensitive when talking on the phone in places like restaurants, aircraft, movies etc.
- 23.** Gently clean and disinfect your phone often due to germs.
- 24.** Mobile phones are damaging social relationships – put the phone down and talk to each other.
- 25.** Do not use language on a mobile that you would not use in person.
- 26.** Mobiles phones and other devices have been implicated in robbing students of sleep. No devices in bedrooms at night and remember to switch them off.
- 27.** If you feel that you lack self-control then a number of Apps exist such as the free Self-control App from Mac. 'Freedom' is an anti-distraction App which stops users connecting to the internet at certain times. Furthermore, BreakFree, AppDetox, StayOnTask and Moment are other Apps which may assist.
- 28.** Do you really need so many social contacts when you don't physically know the person? Cull your contacts and keep it real. Interact in the real world.
- 29.** Get your eyes tested by an Optometrist because too much screen time can damage eyes.
- 30.** An excellent website to view is www.thinkyouknow.org.au  – this website has information on Instagram, Facebook, Kik, Snapchat and Twitter and how you can protect

yourself.

(Cyberbullying Guidelines adapted from Kings Boys Cyberbullying Info)

These guidelines won't stop things going wrong. If that occurs then parents and teachers are a great resource along with:

Kids Helpline – 1800551800 and www.kidshelp.com.au ↗

Lifeline – 131 114

Salvo Youth Line – 9360.3000

Youth Beyond Blue – www.youthbeyondblue.com ↗

Reach Out - www.reachout.com.au ↗

Bullying No Way – www.bullyingnoway.com.au ↗

www.cybersmart.gov.au ↗

www.bravehearts.org.au ↗ (see join the dots)

SAFETY FIRST

Appendix

European Academy for Environmental Medicine (EUROPAEM): “Studies, empirical observations, and patient reports clearly indicate interactions between EMF exposure and health problems. Individual susceptibility and environmental factors are frequently neglected. New wireless technologies and applications have been introduced without any certainty about their health effects, raising new challenges for medicine and society”....“On the one hand, there is strong evidence that long-term exposure to certain EMFs is a risk factor for diseases such as certain cancers, Alzheimer’s disease, and male infertility. On the other hand, the emerging electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS) is more and more recognized by health authorities, disability administrators and case workers, politicians, as well.” (<https://europaem.eu/en/library/blog-en/97-europaem-emf-guideline-2016> ↗)

American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM): “The fact that RF exposure causes neurological damage has been documented repeatedly. Increased blood-brain barrier permeability and oxidative damage, which are associated with brain cancer and neurodegenerative diseases, have been found (https://www.aaemonline.org/emf_rf_position.php ↗)

In 2013, AAEM specifically recommended only wired internet (no WiFi) in schools:

<https://www.aaemonline.org/pdf/WiredSchools.pdf> ↗

American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP): This peak paediatric body stated: "Children are disproportionately affected by environmental exposures, including cell phone radiation. The differences in bone density and the amount of fluid in a child's brain compared to an adult's brain could allow children to absorb greater quantities of RF energy deeper into their brains than adults. The current exposure limits may not reflect the latest research on RF energy"

(<http://www.saferemr.com/2013/09/american-academy-of-pediatrics-demands.html> ↗)

Russian National Committee on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (RNCNIRP): "the following health hazards are likely to be faced by the children mobile phone users in the nearest future: disruption of memory, decline of attention, diminishing learning and cognitive abilities, increased irritability, sleep problems, increase in sensitivity to the stress, increased epileptic readiness. Expected (possible) remote health risks: brain tumours, tumours of acoustical and vestibular nerves (in the age of 25-30 years), Alzheimer's disease, "dementia", depressive syndrome, and the other types of degeneration of the nervous structures of the brain (in the age of 50 to 60)."

(<http://www.who.int/peh-emf/project/mapnatreps/RUSSIA%20report%202008.pdf> ↗)

Ministry of Health of Israel: "recommends that students remain at a distance of at least 1.5 meters from electrical cabinets and that use of wireless communication networks in schools be reduced." (http://www.health.gov.il/publicationsfiles/bsv_sviva2014e.pdf ↗ *page 70*)

French National Agency of Health Security of Food, Environment and Labour (ANSES): "the Agency emphasises that children can be more exposed than adults because of their morphological and anatomical features, in particular their small size, as well as the characteristics of some of their tissues. It is issuing a series of recommendations aimed at adapting the regulatory limit values in order to reduce the exposure of children to electromagnetic fields, which starts from a very early age due to the expansion of the use of new technologies."

(<https://www.anses.fr/en/content/radiofrequency-radiation-mobile-telephones-and-wireless-technologies> ↗)

Medical Association Vienna: An English translation of the statement on reducing mobile phone: <http://www.wirelesstechsafety.com/medical-exposure-guidelines-em-radiation.htm> ↗


Poster: <http://www.aekwien.at/aekmedia/Medizinische-Handy-Regeln.pdf> ↗

National Committee on Environment and Children's Health of Cyprus. Their information video for teenagers (with English subtitles done by the Environmental Health Trust USA:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCy3WfaXZkl> ↗

Website info: (<http://www.cyprus-child-environment.org/easyconsole.cfm/id/324A> ↗ Click on the English flag on top left for English translation).

International EMF Scientist Appeal: 236 scientists from 41 countries who have studied biological/health effects of artificial electromagnetic radiation and published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature have petitioned the UN and the WHO for immediate measures to protect public health from wireless health dangers: <https://emfscientist.org> ↗

While Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) has not yet given such warnings, it does not rule out risks: “There is no established scientific evidence that the use of mobile phones causes any health effects. However, some studies have shown a weak association between heavy mobile phone use and brain cancer.”.....“However the possibility of harm cannot be completely ruled out”...”Based largely on this limited evidence the International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified RF fields as possibly carcinogenic to humans.” (<https://www.arpansa.gov.au/understanding-radiation/radiation-sources/more-radiation-sources/mobile-phones> )

ARPANSA recommends exposure minimisation:

“The most effective way to reduce exposure is to increase the distance between the mobile phone and the user. This can be achieved by using a hands-free kit or speaker options. Users should pay attention to manufacturers’ advice regarding spacing from the body if phones are to be attached to belts or placed in pockets. Other things that can be done to reduce RF EME exposure from mobile phones include:

- not using a mobile phone when a normal wired phone is available,
- sending a text message instead of making a voice call,
- limiting the duration of the calls, and
- making calls where reception is good”.

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