

Mobile phones: risk and responsibility

[Technology](#), [Mobile Phone](#)



Mobile phones, the 21st century way of communicating, are they a great thing that works wonders and revolutionize people's lives? Or are the risks too high a price to pay? I am going to investigate the risks of using mobile phones. Around 1/4 (6 million) of mobile phone users are under the age of 18 and the number of young users is expected to rise with the total numbers of users is meant to rise to 1.2 billion by 2005 with the fastest growing market as the 9-10 year olds. Consequently the questions - are children more at risk than others and what are the risks need to be asked and answered.

Firstly health. The area of the brain and its reaction to radiation is very vague and scientists are not 100% sure about anything. There have been no specific experiments carried out by scientists and there is a big gap in our scientific knowledge in this area, but it has been shown that mobile phone use does affect brain activity and experts consider children to be more vulnerable there are many reasons for this one of these is that children are not fully developed and their skulls are thinner and so it is easier for the radiation waves to penetrate the skull whereas a fully grown person will have a thicker skull and so is less at risk, although it has been proven through research that use of mobile phones speeds up an individual's reactions.

Research has been done on 420 000 phone users to find out whether they have a link with cancer, no link was found. However, the incidence of brain cancer has increased 25% since 1973, according to the National Cancer Institute. Each year, 185, 000 Americans will be diagnosed with a primary or metastatic brain tumour, according to the National Brain Tumour Foundation. Also, in another Swedish study a correlation was found between brain tumours and mobile phone use, regardless of which side of the head it is

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used. So all in all, though the current balance of evidence does not show health problems caused by mobile phones, it does show that mobile phone use does affect brain activity and this is not a problem the mobile phone manufacturers can ignore.

Another aspect is base stations (masts.) Should we be worrying about these as well? It is said that the closer the phone is to a mast the safer they are. This is because they automatically reduce the output by about 1000th of the full power. Therefore, the more people who use the mobile phones; the more masts the companies will put up; the safer it will be to use the mobile phones. The heating affect from base stations is 5000x smaller than from the mobile phone itself. On the other hand, however, the environmental impact of masts might affect people's sense of well-being and there is a perceived risk from them to health, so there is particular concern when placed near schools.

The expense is another issue there is definitely two sides to this argument. One side of the argument is that the mobile is an unnecessary expense for parents to cope with, and that the youngsters take advantage of their parents. On the other hand, if there is a problem with this, then the parents can either say 'look use it sparingly', or refuse to pay the bills and buy them a pay and go phone where it is the child's problem if they have no money on their phones and they can pay for their own top-up vouchers. One advantage is that it frees up the landline home for the parents, as a parent - Anne Kent explains: " at first I thought it was unnecessary but soon changed my mind when I saw it freed up our phone at home," and has the further advantage of

reducing landline bills as a consequence. Clearly this problem can be easily solved it just needs a bit of common sense. This leads us onto the next area, children's safety (in relation to crime) and responsible use.

One of the main advantages to young people having mobiles is that it gives their parents peace of mind so there are less worried parents especially those in remote areas, As Mrs Watson of Northumberland explains: " we felt it was important for Sian to have a mobile phone because living in the country we are very isolated." Both parent and child are able to feel more secure only being a telephone call away from each other. On the other hand how secure is a child with the rising crime statistics.

Crime is another big issue that should be considered carefully. Mobile phone robberies make up 36% of London's crime and 41% in Birmingham also. It has been said by the metropolitan police that mugging for mobile phones has increased by 53% in the last year with 11-16 years olds most at risk. 12% of young teenagers have had a phone stolen at least once, and most of this theft is carried out by black males in gangs. It is said by many that they only have phones to show off. So are you prepared to take the risk?

The final issue is whether education is adversely affected. On the one hand many schools say this is not a problem in most cases because there are strict 'no phone' rules. On the other hand, some say that mobiles have become the 'teachers pest' with students using mobiles to text during lesson and so on. Another side to this is the language used in text messages for example: " cul8r" (see you later) could this destroy the English language?

My verdict is that we cannot simply ban phones. It would be like banning the use of cars just because there is a risk of injury or damage. It's not right to take today's generation's way of communicating away from them. Another reason is that if they were banned or even just made illegal for children to have them, there would be hundreds of thousands of jobs lost because the mobile phone industry is growing daily. We don't take the dummy from the baby or the car from the driver, so why the phone from the teenager. However, in the light of the evidence it would be equally foolish to use them wilfully. So sensible precautions should ensure safe use.