

Cornerstone Community Information Sheet

Mobile phones and health: research reviews

Reviews of the research into mobile communications technology and health produced by national and international committees, expert groups and agencies.

The World Health Organisation notes that “In the area of biological effects and medical applications of non-ionizing radiation approximately 25,000 articles have been published over the past 30 years. Despite the feeling of some people that more research needs to be done, scientific knowledge in this area is now more extensive than for most chemicals [<http://www.who.int/peh-emf/about/WhatIsEMF/en/index1.html>]. The scientific community have collated, summarised and assessed these publications into research reviews, the most influential in the UK being the Stewart Report (Mobile Phones and Health) by the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones under the chairmanship of Professor Sir William Stewart. These research reviews are used by Governments to develop policy on exposure to radiofrequency signals.

Published in May 2000, the Stewart Report concluded that the balance of evidence did not suggest that exposures to radio frequency fields below international guidelines could cause adverse health effects, although it acknowledged that biological effects might occur below these values. The report stressed, however, that a biological effect does not necessarily mean a negative impact on health. Walking, drinking a glass of water or listening to music all produce biological effects.

Since 2000, many further reviews have been carried out. Most have made similar recommendations and have come to similar conclusions: that research should continue to address any gaps in the knowledge; and that overall, the possibility of adverse health effects from mobile communications remains unproven.

In April 2012 the independent Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (AGNIR) published a report entitled “Health Effects from Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields”. This report concluded that although a substantial amount of research has been conducted, there is no convincing evidence that RF field exposure below the internationally agreed guideline levels applied in the UK causes health effects in adults or children.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) noted that “To date, no adverse health effects have been established as being caused by mobile phone use” [WHO factsheet 193: Electromagnetic fields and public health: mobile telephones, 2014].

In addition, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority's Scientific Council on Electromagnetic Fields determined that “no new health risks have been identified” in the report “Recent Research on EMF and Health Risk - Twelfth report from SSM's Scientific Council on Electromagnetic Fields, 2017”.

 Cornerstone, Hive 2
1530 Arlington Business Park
Theale, Berkshire, RG7 4SA

Registered Address:
Cornerstone Telecommunications
Infrastructure Limited, Hive 2, 1530 Arlington
Business Park, Theale, Berkshire, RG7 4SA.
Registered in England & Wales No. 08087551.
VAT No. GB142 8555 06

In 2020 the ICNIRP updated their safety guidelines, Dr Eric van Rongen stated 'When we revised the guidelines, we looked at the adequacy of the ones we published in 1998. We found that the previous ones were conservative in most cases, and they'd still provide adequate protection for current technologies...However, the new guidelines provide better and more detailed exposure guidance in particular for the higher frequency range, above 6 GHz, which is of importance to 5G and future technologies using these higher frequencies'.

https://www.icnirp.org/cms/upload/presentations/ICNIRP_Media_Release_110320.pdf

For further information please contact:

Community, Cornerstone

The Hive 2, 1530 Arlington Business Park, Theale, Berks, RG7 4SA

Tel. 01753 564306, community@ctil.co.uk



 Cornerstone, Hive 2
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