

Researchers Investigate Cellphone Cancer Link

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If you tend to hold your mobile phone on your cheek or cheekbone when you're talking on it, you might want to reconsider that habit. A team of researchers has found that holding a mobile phone like that can lead to an increase in the amount of potentially dangerous electromagnetic waves absorbed into the brain and other body parts.

The electronics engineering team led by Prof. Kim Youn-myung at Dankook University said Sunday that they experimented with 12 kinds of handsets to determine how much energy is absorbed from the handsets. They found that the specific absorption rate (SAR) varied by as much as three times depending on how and where the phone is held to the face.

According to the study, the lower the microphone of the handset is placed from the mouth and the closer the handset is held to the cheek, the higher the SAR. This was true regardless of the type of handset -- folder or slide -- and the location of the antenna -- internal or external. Yet SAR was slightly lower with slide types and with internal antennas.



The team came up with guidelines to minimize exposure to electromagnetic waves. They advised not lowering the microphone closer to the chin, keeping it as far from the mouth as possible, and using an internal antenna.

"It's difficult to reduce emissions of electromagnetic waves because doing so deteriorates voice quality," Kim said. "Therefore users need to be aware of the right ways to use mobile phones in order to minimize SAR."

Other studies have found that electromagnetic waves from mobile phones may affect people's health. A preventative medicine team led by Prof. Choi Jae-

work of Korea University surveyed 177 brain cancer patients admitted to the hospital in 2005. In 137 or 77.4 percent of the patients the cancer was located near the spot where the patient held their mobile phone.

"People who held their mobile phones to their right ears got cancer on the right side of the brain, and those who used the left ear got cancer on the left side of the brain," said Yoon Song-yi, one of the team's researchers. "It's too early to conclude that the way they used their mobile phones increased their risk of getting cancer. The final results will come by the end of the year."

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