

Press Release

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Contact: Patricia Wood, Executive Director, Grassroots (516) 883-0887

Back to School: The ABC's of Cell Phone Safety

Experts say kids should limit use,
and keep phones away from their heads

(Port Washington, NY): Grassroots Environmental Education, a New York-based environmental health non-profit, is urging parents to teach their children five simple rules to limit their exposure to cell phone radiation. The group, citing increasing scientific evidence of potential harm from exposure to cell phone radiation, says children are particularly vulnerable.

"With a new school year upon us, the list of back-to-school supplies may very well include a new cell phone, typically one that has more power, one that can perform more functions," says Patti Wood, Executive Director of Grassroots. "But emerging studies from all over the world are telling us we should be extremely cautious about these wireless devices, especially where our children are concerned. Parents should set rules for their kids concerning cell phone use, and schools should adopt similar protective guidelines.

Grassroots is urging parents to teach their children the following five simple rules for cell phone use:

1. Never hold a cell phone directly against your head.
2. Use the speaker setting or a corded headset whenever possible.
3. Switch side (ears) frequently if you have to hold it near your head.
4. Do not carry cell phones in pockets or anywhere else on your body.
5. Use cell phones only for emergencies or quick check-ins.

The debate over whether long-term exposure to cell phones and wireless technologies can cause health problems has been going on for decades. Hundreds of studies have been conducted, but so far, the design of the studies has left many

questions unanswered, and results have been inconclusive, leaving the public understandably concerned and confused.

What is known for certain is that wireless devices, transmitters and cell phone towers emit non-ionizing low-frequency electromagnetic radiation, also sometimes called "RF radiation" or "microwave radiation." Some recent studies have suggested that prolonged or sustained exposure to this type of radiation can damage DNA and cause other health problems, particularly in vulnerable populations such as children.

Independent researchers are trying to understand the relationship between cell phone usage and reported increases in malignant brain tumors, including gliomas, acoustic neuromas and meningiomas. Tumors of the parotid gland (salivary gland) have also been associated with cell phone use.

Cell phone radiation is transmitted by the phone's antenna, which for most current models, is embedded in the body of the phone itself. Virtually all manufacturers warn against holding the device next to the body, advising users to maintain a distance of about one inch.

"The allowable limit for adult exposure to RF radiation in the United States is much higher than it is in many other countries and protects us only against heating," says Dr. Magda Havas, Associate Professor of Environmental & Resource Studies at Trent University in Canada. "Children are more sensitive than adults to all kinds of environmental exposures yet we use the same high exposure standard for children. This doesn't make any sense."

Grassroots has produced a helpful "**Cell Phone Card**" with scientific information about RF radiation and tips for reducing exposures. The card is designed to help parents and school officials understand the issues and make informed decisions. A PDF of the card is available on the grassroots web site:
www.grassrootsinfo.org/cellphones.html

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About Grassroots:

Grassroots Environmental Education is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization based in New York. Grassroots educates the public about the links between common environmental exposures and human health, and the seeks to empower individuals to act as catalysts for change within their own communities. More information is available on the organization's web site, www.GrassrootsInfo.org.