

# Mobile phones. Precautionary options

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## KEY WORDS

Mobile phones; radiofrequency; precautionary principle

## SUMMARY

*Mobile phones have been in use for over two decades and are ubiquitous in the western world for at least ten years. There has been scientific interest and public concern about the possibility of adverse health effects from this relatively new use of non-ionising electromagnetic energy both at the level of the handset and the base station. The proliferation of base transmitter stations in the early 1990's caused a resurgence of interest in the possible health effects of low level RF in general and several significant studies investigated the issue generally using broadcast transmitters as a more predictable source of exposure. Handsets, although of much lower power are closely coupled to the users body and deserve special attention, which they have received. From this research, a high level of assurance of safety has emerged and this is reflected in secure international exposure standards allowing more or less unrestricted use of the technology from a public health point of view. Nonetheless, some research remains unsettled, the science is incomplete in some areas and in the minds of some the unknown provides an uncomfortable level of risk. This debate is unlikely to see an early resolution and so precautionary approaches are increasingly supported. There are a wide range of actions, which have been regarded as precautionary, but ultimately minimisation of public exposure is likely to be the only strategy which could provide a benefit if any risk is later found. There are practical ways of achieving this, but not all proposed strategies seem to recognise them.*