

Another Inconvenient Truth

Can't live without your computer? Feel handicapped without your cell phone? Well, your favourite gadgets might be slowly killing you - literally. TAY SHUYUN tells you more.

Electrostress - it has been dubbed the “disease of the new millennium” by experts. Radiation from ever-present electrical appliances all around us is causing many a sickness, and the scariest thing - most of us haven't even heard of the term ‘electrostress’! Sure, we all know that radiation is bad for us, but are we grossly underestimating this invisible monster?

What *is* electrostress?

According to naturopath Dr. Michael Billmann, the term 'electrostress' refers to “electromagnetic hypersensitivity”. Simply put, the electromagnetic fields generated from electronic devices, otherwise known as electrosmog, affect our bodies, making us much more vulnerable and sensitive to disease and illness. The human body is essentially an “electromagnetic cell compound”, and our cells run on electricity, said Dr. Billmann. “(The human body) by itself is a perfect cell compound, it is like a vibrating and harmonious orchestra,” he explained. External electromagnetic fields from electrical appliances around us will upset this natural balance, which will in turn wreak havoc on our health.

What are the effects?

Just how badly can electrostress affect us? “Everything (illnesses) can be caused by electromagnetic stress,” Dr. Billmann said. However, he explained that it varies from individuals, as everyone has different weak points in their body. “Everyone has their own weaknesses, but the disturbance will set in first where it is your weakest point, like someone who has weak lungs getting breathing problems or even an asthma attack after sitting too long at the computer.”

Common ailments associated with electrostress include everything from sleep disturbances to chronic fatigue, skin allergies, blood circulation problems, poor memory and even cancer. Dr. Billmann warned that it can also inflict damage on your psyche - causing moodiness, irritability and depression.

What are the sources of electrosmog?

All electronic devices emit electromagnetic fields – this includes the computer, mobile phone, television, microwaves, air conditioner... basically everything! Even when these appliances are on standby mode, they still continue to give out radiation.

One of the worst sources of radiation is the mobile phone, as it often comes in direct contact with our bodies when we are using it or wearing it in trouser pockets. According to Dr. Billmann, every 20 minutes, a mobile phone on standby will send out bursts of harmful radiation, even when you do not make a call. Cell phone radiation can penetrate everything – that’s how we are able to get phone reception everywhere! He also cautioned against using cell phones in vehicles and buildings. “The metal and concrete is like a cage that traps the radiation inside.” (Faraday cage effect)

Dr. Billmann also labels the microwave as a big no-no. He explained that not only

does the microwave emit a huge amount of radiation; it also makes unnatural changes to the food being cooked in it. So while that microwave dinner might be convenient and oh-so-tasty, it may not be a very good idea after all! So why you want to put your head in that?

Another source of electrosmog is wireless Internet connections as it is also using microwave technology like every mobile phone, Dr. Billmann pointed out. Imagine an invisible cloud of radiation spread across the entire room, house or building. With more places offering convenient wireless Internet connection these days, should this trend be a pertinent cause for concern instead?

What can I do to protect myself?

There are certain items you can use to harmonise the radiation surrounding your body – Dr. Billmann said that some specific quartz crystals can do this. However, he emphasised that the most effective way to protect your body against electrosmog is to get a product called RayGuard, a patented device that contains a special combination of diamonds, minerals and metals. There is also a sticker called Safer Call that you can place in the mobile phone itself or on the wireless laptop to “harmonize” the balance. Contrary to popular belief, hands-free headsets and Bluetooth earpieces do not help to reduce the radiation from mobile phones at all – in fact, they make things even worse! “It is like placing an antenna right in your ear,” said Dr. Billmann. And usually your phone is still close to your body, most likely in a trouser pocket.

Prevention is better than cure – clichéd it may be, but it rings true in this case. Dr. Billmann advises to avoid or minimize using electronic devices as much as possible. Of

course, to most of us, spending just one day without a computer and mobile phone feels like the equivalent of chopping off one of our limbs. Still, small steps can make a difference! As your body is regulating and healing itself while you sleep, it is important that you are exposed to as little electrosmog as possible while in slumber, Dr. Billmann said. Before you go to sleep every night, switch off or unplug the plugs to your television and computer, turn off your mobile phone, try not to use the air conditioning so much, and throw away your digital alarm clock – use an analogue one instead! Make sure that there are no electrical appliances around your head area and switch off the wireless router at night in your room if possible. Simple actions like these may not seem like much, but according to Dr. Billmann, they can make a big difference to your health.

Is it really that bad? Is there another side to the story?

Man-made electromagnetic fields are used to treat and diagnose patients, the Internet lets us communicate with each other anytime and anywhere, and cable television lets us tune in to *Desperate Housewives* every week. While there is the definite danger of electrostress, who can deny the convenience and wonders it has brought to our daily lives? Of course, there are also other considerations like lifestyle and diet that can cause illness, said Dr. Billmann, but it has been scientifically proven that electrostress is a contributing factor.

Most Singaporeans are not aware of the severity of the problem. “What is electrostress?” said Darius Wong, 16, an avid gamer who spends at least 4 hours a day on the computer. He said that he does not know about the harmful effects of radiation, and does not take any precautions against it. Web designer Zheng Shuling, who spends an

average of 12 hours a day on the computer, had a similar response. “I know about it, but I can’t really be bothered.”

“Many (not only Singaporeans) don’t know, and they don’t care,” said Dr. Billmann, “it’s not a new science, as these facts are aware and well researched meanwhile in Europe and USA and we know already, but in today’s society nobody is actually focusing on it... we are too busy wanting new computers and hand phones... Radiation is physics and here we are reaching a new era in medicine. “Everything in life is vibration”, to quote Albert Einstein. Science has proven already the effects, of very subtle electromagnetic waves as well as GigaHertz technology on every living organism. and 10 years from now, we will realize that actually everything is related to everything and reacts to everything.”

In the meantime just try to avoid excess exposure to artificial radiation as far as possible and make sure you better work with your laptop on battery mode. It is not about condemning new technology, nobody wants to live in stone age, but my work is much more about creating awareness and offer health solutions for our new electro stressed generation.

End note: Dr Michael Billmann is a Naturopath and Doctor of alternative medicine registered in Germany and based in Singapore. He uses natural therapy methods combined with latest insights of medical science to treat illnesses, without side effects . He has his own clinic in Singapore, where he provides consultations and advises treatment for patients. He also conducts workshops and seminars on naturopathic health care, including some about electrostress. He is the sole distributor of RayGuard in Singapore. For more information on electrostress, you can visit his website at <http://www.sanatio.net>.

Word Count (excluding standfirst, headline and end note): 1018