

Are mobile phones safe for children to use?

Are mobile phones safe for children to use? That's the question many parents face when deciding whether they are or aren't. There are many arguments for and against. Children's nervous systems are still developing, and there are fears that radiation could penetrate into their brains. Experts say there is no link between mobile phone use and cancer in adults but there is still widespread uncertainty about the risks children face. Mobile phones have been in use for a relatively short time and yet cancers can take decades to develop. Most scientists however agree on one thing and that is children may be more vulnerable than the rest of us to their possible ill-effects. Kids have a skull that is thinner, less protective; they have a higher content of water in the brain, so there are many reasons why they absorb more of the same radiation.

European research just published in America's Journal of the National Cancer Institute has concluded children who use mobile phones are at no greater risk of developing brain cancer than those who don't. But critics say the research is too short-term and the data are out of date. The International Research Agency for Research in Cancer (IARC) has recently reclassified mobile phones. The UN agency has fallen short of saying that mobile phones are definitely hazardous; instead they have reclassified mobile phones as possible carcinogenic. The GSMA, the industry body representing the interests of the mobile phone industry followed up the IARC's findings by saying: "The IARC classification suggests that a hazard is possible but not likely. The GSMA said there was no need for further research. Some scientists disagree. Doctor Annie Sasco: "I think mobile phones are a risk for brain tumours and we have quite substantial epidemiological evidence showing that people who use cell-phones for more than 10 years have about a doubling in their risk of glioma, which is a brain tumour."

At the end of the day it is up to the individual to decide whether to dismiss the warnings or to take minor precautions to ensure those thought most vulnerable do not blame us if the direst predictions do turn out to be correct.

Category: Research / Health / Mobile phones

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Are mobile phones safe for children to use? Go round the room getting a yes/no answer.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) Would you let your young kids use a mobile phone?

6. **Reasons to let your child use a mobile phone or not:** In pairs think of five reasons why you would let your child have a mobile phone. Then add five reasons you would not. Write them below. Discuss together. What are your conclusions?

Reasons for	Reasons against
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. **Let's roleplay 1: Voice of America:** In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Voice of America* Radio studio. Today's theme: *Are mobile phones safe for children to use?*

1	Mobile phone top boss	3	A parent of a young child
2	A scientist	4	Yourself

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

8. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Mobile phones**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

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9. Let's roleplay 2: Buying a mobile phone: In pairs. You are in a shop. You are a customer who wishes to buy a new mobile phone or similar. The other person is the shop assistant. Discuss the various options on offer. *5-minutes*.

10. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What does IARC mean?
- 2) What does GSMA mean?
- 3) Who have a skull that is thinner?
- 4) Name the Doctor.
- 5) Finish this sentence – "At the end of the day..."

Student B

- 1) What is a glioma?
- 2) What did the UN agency say?
- 3) What was published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* in America?
- 4) What do most scientists agree on?
- 5) Sum up what the Dr said.

11. Mobile phone uses: Think of 10 uses for a mobile phone. Write them down then compare with what your partner has. Discuss together.

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

12. Presentation: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: ***Are mobile phones safe for children to use?*** Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the good and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

13. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: ***Are mobile phones safe for children to use?*** Your e-mail can be read out in class.

14. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Mobile phones _____
- b) Children _____
- c) Cancer _____

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DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What is your government's attitude to this issue?
- 3) What is your attitude to this issue?
- 4) Do you think children's brains are damaged by mobile phones if they use them at too young an age?
- 5) How safe are mobile phones for children?
- 6) What do scientists say about children using mobile phones?
- 7) It's only a little phone. Just how bad can that be for kid?
- 8) Does moving the mobile away from the head help protect kids?
- 9) What can parents do to minimise possible future harm?
- 10) What three tips would you offer parents with small kids who want a mobile phone?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Would you let your children have a mobile phone? Why? Why not?
- 3) Should we wait 30-40 years to find out the truth about mobile phones and children using them?
- 4) Do you know any children who use mobile phones?
- 5) What is the attitude of other parents with small children who you know?
- 6) Should people be educated on the possible dangers of children using mobile phones?
- 7) Is it not just common sense for parents to be wary about kids using mobile phones?
- 8) Should there be a minimum age-limit for kids to use a mobile phone? Why? Why not?
- 9) Why are kids more susceptible to possibly getting a brain tumour in later life if they use a mobile phone at a young age?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Are mobile phones safe for children to use?

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Are mobile phones safe for children to use?
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(The teacher can moderate the session)

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Are mobile phones safe for children to use?

Are (1)_____ phones safe for children to use? That's the question many parents face when deciding whether they are or aren't. There are many (2)_____ for and against. Children's nervous systems are still developing, and there are fears that radiation could (3)_____ into their brains. Experts say there is no link between mobile phone use and (4)_____ in adults but there is still widespread uncertainty about the risks children face. Mobile phones have been in use for a relatively short time and yet cancers can take decades to develop. Most (5)_____ however agree on one thing and that is children may be more (6)_____ than the rest of us to their possible ill-effects. Kids have a (7)_____ that is thinner, less protective; they have a higher content of water in the brain, so there are many reasons why they absorb more of the same (8)_____.

radiation

vulnerable

cancer

penetrate

skull

scientists

arguments

mobile

European research just published in America's Journal of the National Cancer Institute has concluded children who use mobile phones are at no greater risk of developing (1)_____ cancer than those who don't. But critics say the research is too short-term and the data are out of date. The International Research Agency for Research in Cancer (IARC) has recently reclassified mobile phones. The UN agency has fallen short of saying that mobile phones are definitely (2)_____; instead they have reclassified mobile phones as possible carcinogenic. The GSMA, the industry body representing the interests of the mobile phone industry followed up the IARC's findings by saying: "The IARC classification suggests that a (3)_____ is possible but not likely. The GSMA said there was no need for further research. Some scientists (4)_____. Doctor Annie Sasco: "I think mobile phones are a risk for brain tumours and we have quite (5)_____ epidemiological (6)_____ showing that people who use cell-phones for more than 10 years have about a doubling in their (7)_____ of glioma, which is a brain (8)_____."

hazardous

substantial

tumour

disagree

evidence

risk

brain

hazard

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Are mobile phones safe for children to use?

Are _____ for children to use? That's the question many parents face when deciding whether they are or aren't. There are many arguments for and against. Children's nervous systems are still developing, and there are fears that radiation _____ their brains. Experts say there is no link between mobile phone use and cancer in adults but there is still widespread uncertainty about the _____. Mobile phones have been in use for a relatively short time and yet cancers can take decades to develop. Most scientists however _____ and that is children may be more vulnerable than the rest of us to their possible ill-effects. Kids have a skull that is thinner, less protective; they have a higher content of water in the brain, so there are many reasons why _____ the same radiation.

European research just published in America's Journal of the National Cancer Institute has concluded children _____ are at no greater risk of developing brain cancer than those who don't. But critics say the research is too short-term and the _____. The International Research Agency for Research in Cancer (IARC) has recently reclassified mobile phones. The UN agency has fallen short of saying that mobile phones are _____; instead they have reclassified mobile phones as possible carcinogenic. The GSMA, _____ representing the interests of the mobile phone industry followed up the IARC's findings by saying: "The IARC classification suggests that a hazard is possible but not likely. The GSMA said there was no need _____. Some scientists disagree. Doctor Annie Sasco: "I think mobile phones are a risk for brain tumours and we have quite substantial epidemiological evidence showing that people who use cell-phones for more than 10 years have about a doubling in their risk of glioma, _____."

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Are mobile phones safe for children to use?

Are mobile phones safe for children to use? (1)___'s the question many parents face (2)___ deciding whether they are or aren't. There are many arguments for and against. Children's nervous systems are still developing, and there are fears that radiation could penetrate into (3)___ brains. Experts say there is no link between mobile phone use and cancer in adults but there is (4)___ widespread uncertainty about the risks children face. Mobile phones have been in use for a relatively short time and yet cancers can take decades to develop. (5)___ scientists (6)___ agree on one thing and that is children may be more vulnerable than the rest of us to their possible ill-effects. Kids have a skull that is thinner, less protective; they have a higher content of water in the brain, so there are (7)___ reasons why they absorb (8)___ of the same radiation.

their

however

many

more

when

that

still

most

European research just published in America's Journal (1)___ the National Cancer Institute has concluded children who use mobile phones are at no greater risk of developing brain cancer than those (2)___ don't. (3)___ critics say the research is too short-term and the data are out of date. The International Research Agency (4)___ Research in Cancer (IARC) has recently reclassified mobile phones. The UN agency has fallen short of saying that mobile phones are definitely hazardous; instead they have reclassified mobile phones as possible carcinogenic. The GSMA, (5)___ industry body representing the interests of the mobile phone industry followed up the IARC's findings by saying: "The IARC classification suggests that a hazard is possible but not likely. The GSMA said there was no need for further research. Some scientists disagree. Doctor Annie Sasco: "(6)___ think mobile phones are a risk for brain tumours and (7)___ have quite substantial epidemiological evidence showing that people who use cell-phones for more than 10 years have about a doubling in their risk of glioma, which is (8)___ brain tumour."

a

but

who

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the

we

of

for

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	brain	11	cancer
2	precautions	12	protective
3	possible	13	uncertainty
4	reclassified	14	relatively
5	brain tumour	15	absorb
6	predictions	16	direct
7	arguments	17	hazardous
8	nervous systems	18	penetrate
9	thinner	19	substantial
10	vulnerable	20	evidence

LINKS

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/click_online/9554782.stm

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-13988882>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-13608444>

http://www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=647

<http://www.mobilewise.org/facts/how-safe-are-mobile-phones-for-children>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Are mobile phones safe for children to use? Are **mobile** phones safe for children to use? That's the question many parents face when deciding whether they are or aren't. There are many **arguments** for and against. Children's nervous systems are still developing, and there are fears that radiation could **penetrate** into their brains. Experts say there is no link between mobile phone use and **cancer** in adults but there is still widespread uncertainty about the risks children face. Mobile phones have been in use for a relatively short time and yet cancers can take decades to develop. Most **scientists** however agree on one thing and that is children may be more **vulnerable** than the rest of us to their possible ill-effects. Kids have a **skull** that is thinner, less protective; they have a higher content of water in the brain, so there are many reasons why they absorb more of the same **radiation**.

European research just published in America's Journal of the National Cancer Institute has concluded children who use mobile phones are at no greater risk of developing **brain** cancer than those who don't. But critics say the research is too short-term and the data are out of date. The International Research Agency for Research in Cancer (IARC) has recently reclassified mobile phones. The UN agency has fallen short of saying that mobile phones are definitely **hazardous**; instead they have reclassified mobile phones as possible carcinogenic. The GSMA, the industry body representing the interests of the mobile phone industry followed up the IARC's findings by saying: "The IARC classification suggests that a **hazard** is possible but not likely. The GSMA said there was no need for further research. Some scientists **disagree**. Doctor Annie Sasco: "I think mobile phones are a risk for brain tumours and we have quite **substantial** epidemiological **evidence** showing that people who use cell-phones for more than 10 years have about a doubling in their **risk** of glioma, which is a brain tumour." (V3)

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