

# Is your cellphone safe?



**Great news: A few simple strategies can make your cellphone risk-free!**

Are repeated news reports about cellphone dangers scaring you? Relax! To enjoy the convenience of your cell and protect your health, experts advise:

## ● Keeping elbows pain-free by switching hands

"Holding your arm bent for long periods of time can strain and pinch the elbow's main nerve, causing aching, burning, numbness or tingling in the forearm and hand," says Peter Evans, M.D.,

medical director of the Cleveland Clinic's Upper Extremity Center. "This can even lead to permanent nerve damage and weakness."

**Do:** Switch hands every few minutes or use a headset.

**Don't:** Go hands-free by wedging the phone between your ear and shoulder; you'll be trading "cellphone elbow" for neck pain.

## ● Dodging thumb ache with texting breaks

Instant messaging and surfing the Web on a handheld device can trigger a repetitive strain injury known as "BlackBerry thumb." Symptoms include throbbing pain and stiffness in the joint. "And women are thirteen times more likely to develop it, since their hormones make ligaments and joints looser," reveals Dr. Evans.

**Do:** Take frequent breaks, keep messages short and use e-mail whenever possible. Also helpful: Ice the hurt thumb for 10 minutes every hour until the pain subsides.

**Don't:** Spend your money on thumb splints and glove-type over-the-counter treatments. These seemingly quick cures may aggravate the problem!

## Does your child love to text?

Good news: Texting is safe! Studies suggest that youngsters' brains are vulnerable to cellphone radiation—but only when the phone's against their ear.

## ● Reducing radiation with the push of a button

Long-term studies in Europe suggest that years of exposure to cellphone radiation may increase brain-cancer risk as much as 30%—but only if you don't take proper precautions, says Devra L. Davis, Ph.D., M.P.H., professor of public health at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Do:** "Switch on your speakerphone whenever possible," she advises. "With your phone on the table instead of against your ear, your radiation exposure is reduced one-thousand-fold!"

**Don't:** Keep your phone in your pocket or on your belt while it's turned on. Tissue in the lower body area absorbs radiation more quickly than in the head.

—Brenda Kearns

## Health News!

**Relax with chocolate!** Indulging in a 1.4-oz. bar of dark chocolate every day helps keep stress hormones in check, even when you're feeling overworked and overwhelmed, according to a new report.