

Wi-Fi in Schools FAQ



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1. What are the official warnings?

The World Health Organization/International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (RF/EMF) as possibly carcinogenic to humans - Group 2B. (May 2011)

This classification applies to all wireless devices which emit microwave radio-frequency radiation.

Health Canada advises reducing our exposure to RF/EMF from cellphones, especially children, and that more research is needed. (Oct 2011) We believe this is too little, too late. Do children need to take the role of test subjects in the absence of proper testing or real precautionary action? Health Canada states it is unethical to experiment on children, yet that is exactly the situation currently. Remember asbestos, tobacco, DDT or the tainted blood scandal?

2. What are other countries doing?

Independent scientists have testified to our parliament that Canada's Safety Code 6 is obsolete and not protective of the public, especially children. The European Parliament is recommending hard-wired connections wherever possible to protect children, the same as Israel and Russia. For example, the town of Herouville St. Clair in France removed Wi-Fi from all of its schools and public buildings, and replaced it with fiber-optic cable. Schools in Switzerland use fiber-optic as well. Why are our schools in Canada not the safest in the world?

3. What does a Precautionary Approach look like?

When an activity raises potential threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context, the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof.

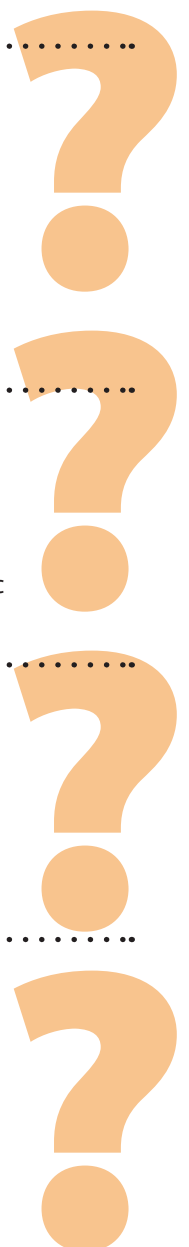
THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE PUTS THE BURDEN OF PROOF ON THE COMPANIES TO PROVE WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY IS SAFE, NOT ON CONCERNED PARENTS, TEACHERS AND PUBLIC TO PROVE IT IS HARMFUL.

4. Is Wi-Fi safer than cell phone use?

No. Wi-Fi base stations employ a beacon signal, which is continuously emitting a pulse-modulated microwave signal when activated. The Wi-Fi radio frequency is 2.45 GHz, the exact same as microwave ovens. Bombarding children, teachers and staff to this constant unknown risk exposure for 5 days a week, 6 hours a day, for years on end is irresponsible when the simple solution of a safer wired connection exists.

(In testing done by the UK Powerwatch Organization, a Wi-Fi-enabled laptop at a user distance of 50 cm generated higher RF radiation exposure levels (100-6,000 $\mu\text{W}/\text{m}^2$) than a cell tower at a distance of 100 m (400-800 $\mu\text{W}/\text{m}^2$). RF radiation levels during active use can be as high as 10,000 $\mu\text{W}/\text{m}^2$.

Ambient exposure levels in a classroom with a Wi-Fi access point may range from 100-4,000 $\mu\text{W}/\text{m}^2$, depending on a person's distance to the access point.)



5. Wi-Fi has been around for a few years – why haven't we seen a problem?

It can take 20 to 30 years for tumours and cancers to develop. Scientists point to a worldwide increase of those with Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity (EHS), and estimate that approximately 15% of the population is affected, and that number is increasing. Certain Canadian Mayors have proclaimed EHS as an emerging environment-related illness, stating people in their communities suffer from symptoms such as headaches, heart irregularities, dizziness, sleep difficulties, tinnitus, shortness of breath, chest discomfort, muscular weakness, gastric problems, visual disturbances, skin alterations, concentration/focus issues, short-term memory loss and severe neurological problems. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing has noted a decline in the health of youth. There has been a marked increase in the last decade in childhood developmental disorders, neurological disorders, immune dysfunction and cancer. Between the years 2006-2010, there has been a near doubling of anti-psychotic medication for children aged 6 to 17. Are our children being misdiagnosed?

6. What do insurance companies say?

Companies like Lloyd's of London refuse to insure the telecommunications industry against health-related claims in response to growing science evidencing health risks from exposure to wireless technologies. The Austrian Insurance industry also halted liability coverage for health damages, after a review of independent studies demonstrating harm. Why are they not insuring them? Some insurance analysts have stated that this exposure could be our "next asbestos." Asbestos was considered completely safe at one time, yet it nearly destroyed Lloyd's due to health-related impacts that continue to this day. In a recent case, an employee sued the employer for ill health related to heavy cell and cordless phone exposure on the job, and the employee won. This is a precedent-setting decision, as the court would not accept any industry-based evidence in finding for the plaintiff.

7. Should there be an Informed Consent procedure?

Parents have the legal right and moral obligation to choose the risks their children will sustain. Schools do not have the right to make such choices on behalf of parents, without a waiver or informed consent. This is a serious oversight, given continuously emerging science evidencing health risks from non-thermal, biological effects from wireless technology, which is unmonitored and often involuntary. Informed consent procedure must include access to all information available without censorship or manipulation. Health Canada states it has no long-term studies to provide evidence that wireless technology is safe for children because it's unethical to do such studies on children. Meanwhile, Health Canada's Royal Panel Report states "Continued studies of exposed human populations provide the primary means of directly assessing the potential effects of RF fields on human health." This is incongruent with Canada's Federal research guidelines and study protocols, outlining the necessity for voluntary, informed, ongoing consent, leaving participants free to withdraw at any time. www.pre.ethics.gc.ca

8. Do we need Wi-Fi to prepare children for the 21st Century?

No. The most important tools for our children are the computer and the internet. Wi-Fi is merely a convenience in that it allows laptops to be moved without having a cable connection. In truth, most laptops will be plugged into an electrical outlet, so why not an internet cable, too? Fiber optic cables provide the best internet connections: the service is faster; the cable carries much more data; the data is more secure from hackers; the cable does not emit radiation.

9. What can we do?

Talk to teachers, parents, administrators, school trustees, your doctor and MLA, and insist that a precautionary approach be taken. Reduce exposure by using hard-wired connections wherever possible. Demand that your legal right be protected by insisting on an informed consent procedure.

For more information:

www.citizensforsafetechnology.org
www.whynotwired.wordpress.com (local school issues)
www.safeschool.ca
www.magdahavas.com
www.weepinitiative.org
www.safeinschool.org
www.wiredchild.org
www.kawarthasafetechnology.org



"Sensitivity to electromagnetic radiation is the emerging health problem of the 21st century. It is imperative health practitioners, governments, schools and parents learn more about it. The human health stakes are significant".

William Rea, MD Founder & Director of the Environmental Health Center, Dallas; Past President, American Academy of Environmental Medicine