All you need to know about radiations from mobile towers: IMA

New Delhi, 16th April 2017: There has been plenty of research about radiation and how it affects the human body. The recent ruling by the Supreme Court, where it directed to shut down a mobile phone tower after a man claimed that the radiations emitted by the tower were the cause of his cancer, has rekindled the debate about cell phone towers and the electromagnetic radiation emitted by them. Many organizations and activists have been campaigning against mobile towers near residential areas or otherwise, but the government maintains that low Electro Magnetic Frequency (EMF) from mobile towers does not pose any major health hazards.

Speaking about this issue, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said," Many studies have been conducted over the years that refute the connection between non-ionizing radiations given out by cell phone towers, and cancer. Many oncologists are also of the view that these radiations are not carcinogenic. We, at IMA, feel that although the radiations may not be the primary cause of cancer, some precautions certainly need to be taken to rule out any long-term health effects as a result of these radiations."

Radiations are of two types: ionizing and non-ionizing. X-rays fall into the former kind, are harmful to the body, and can cause cancer. Non-ionizing radiation is a low-energy radiation and generates heat and mobile tower radiation falls into this category. As per a report, in India, the safety standards followed are 10 times more stringent than a majority of other countries. There is a certain limit for radiation that is prescribed and mobile handsets emitting over 1.6 watt/kilogram radiation are not allowed in India. This limit is called the Specific Absorption Rate or SAR.

Dr Aggarwal further said," Many studies have been conducted over a long period of time to assess whether mobile phones pose a potential health risk and some have concluded that the health effects caused by mobile towers are not adverse in nature and are not likely to cause cancer. Studies also indicate that it is the antenna from which we should keep distance and not from tower and that too if we are positioned facing antenna at comparable height. Despite all the claims, it remains a fact that some health hazards do exist and therefore taking precautions to avoid constant exposure to cell phones and towers is key."

While it is still being debated as to whether mobile towers and cell phones increase the risk of cancer or not, there are certain safety measures one can take.
Hold the cell phone away from the body to the extent possible.
Do not press the phone handset against your head. Radiation level is proportional to the square of the distance from the source and therefore, being very close increases energy absorption much more. The farther your brain is from the handset the better it is.
Limit the length of mobile calls.
If the radio signal is weak, a mobile phone will increase its transmission power. Find a strong signal and avoid movement. Use your phone where reception is good.
Metal and water are good conductors of radio waves so avoid using a mobile phone while wearing metal-framed glasses or having wet hair.
Let the call connect before putting the handset on your ear or start speaking and listening – A mobile phone first makes the communication at higher power and then reduces power to an adequate level. More power is radiated during call connecting time
Reduce mobile phone use by children as a younger person will likely have a longer lifetime exposure to radiation from cell phones
While purchasing a Mobile Handset, check the SAR value of the mobile phone. This can be searched on internet, if the model number and make is known. Dial *#07# to know the SAR value.
To lower exposure to radiation, close additional transmissions in the phone like WiFi, Bluetooth, GPS or Data connections when not needed. Additional connections not only drain battery but also dramatically increased device radiation emissions.
Keep the phone away from areas of the body such as eyes, testicles, breasts and internal organs.
The phone antenna has to perform extra work to arrange communication with the cell tower that increases RF exposure when the battery is lower than 20% the RF exposure increases.
Alternate your ear while talking.
While sleeping, keep the phone at a distance of 6 ft (2 meter).
Do not use a metal case as your phone cover.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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