



Cell phones may hurt sperm

TENILLE BONOBUORE

Globe and Mail Update

Published Monday, Oct. 23 2006, 4:33 PM EDT

Last updated Tuesday, Apr. 07 2009, 1:36 AM EDT

Men who spend hours on their cell phones have lower sperm counts than usual, according to new research that suggests radiation or heat from the phones could be to blame.

Both quality and quantity appear to be affected by heavy cell phone use.

In an observational study carried out in Cleveland, Mumbai and New Orleans, 364 men who were undergoing evaluation for infertility were divided into three groups according to their sperm count.

Among the men with a normal sperm count, those who did not use a cell phone at all averaged 86 million per millilitre, with 68 per cent motility (swimming ability) and 40 per cent being in normal form.

However, men who used a cell phone for more than four hours a day averaged 66 million sperm per millilitre, with 48 per cent motility and 21 per cent taking normal form.

The findings, from a team led by Ashok Agarwal of the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, could indicate that the electromagnetic fields generated by mobile phone handsets are interfering with sperm production.

In the paper 'Relationship between cell phone use and human fertility: an observational study' presented to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine conference in New Orleans on Monday, Dr. Agarwal says the use of cell phones is strongly associated with a decrease in sperm quality, but said large scale studies are needed to identify exactly what is causing that drop.

Dr. Agarwal said that if the effect is genuinely caused by mobiles, several explanations are possible. Animal work has shown that electromagnetic fields can damage Leydig cells in the testes. Mobile phones are also known to cause a heating effect on tissue that could be damaging to sperm.

Both phenomena occur over short distances, so holding a phone at a distance from the crotch while speaking should not be dangerous.

Follow us on Twitter: [@globeandmail](https://twitter.com/@globeandmail) [<https://twitter.com/@globeandmail>]