

Downsides of Devices

Why I Don't Use Wireless Tech

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Early in 2012, my health took a drastic downturn. I started getting pressure headaches, dizzy spells, cognition-numbing brain fog, and other debilitating symptoms whenever I traveled from our country home to the nearest town, where 4G transmitters and a community-wide wireless internet service had recently gone live.

My symptoms soon got worse, hitting me anytime I tried to use computers or was around cell phones or other wireless devices. I became unable to enter any WiFied space without feeling my head symptoms surge within minutes. Sometimes it felt like I'd slammed into a force field. Once the symptoms set in, they would worsen until I got myself back to our home in a relative dead zone — but even then, the brain fog and other symptoms could persist for hours or even days before dissipating.

It wasn't long before I realized I'd developed a bad case of Electromagnetic Hyper-Sensitivity (EHS). Not only did my reactivity to wireless radiation from devices worsen, it also spread to other electrical equipment. Halogen lights, a plug-in battery charger, digital displays on appliances, and more had now all become sources of electromagnetic radiation (EMR) that my body disliked.¹

No longer able to use computers or get anywhere near WiFi, I was forced to quit working and became close to homebound. Even at home, we had to make changes, disconnecting the equipment I could no longer tolerate and turning off electrical circuits to half our house so I could stay inside without triggering symptoms.

At first I had hoped for a quick resolution of my malady. I consulted various MDs and naturopaths, some experienced with EHS, some who knew little about it but were open to learning more, one who recommended therapy. And I did consult a psychologist, mostly to help handle the shock of becoming so limited so suddenly by my condition, but just in case, asked him to test whether this affliction might be psychosomatic. "Unlikely," he concluded, after multiple appointments via landline phone and several psychological tests.

Later, this same psychologist told me of another patient referred to him after her doctor could find no physical reason for her recent headaches. When my psychologist asked her what had changed around the time the headaches began, her list of answers included buying a new smartphone. This prompted my psychologist to suggest she turn the phone completely off for a few days. When she did, her headaches stopped. She got rid of that phone.

I was glad for her, and glad that this experience helped show my psychologist, as well as the other woman's doctor and the woman herself that wireless radiation exposures could have real physical effects. At the same time, I was disappointed that my own case of reactivity to wireless radiation was not so easily solved.

Instead, my experience with EHS became a multi-year journey, still ongoing. It has taught me many things about my own health — and also about the general effects of our hyper-rapid adoption of now billions of digital devices. What I discovered as I delved more deeply into the vast topic of EMR and health has convinced me that our widespread use of wireless technologies is a big mistake.

Here are a few things I learned.

- Wireless radiation is biologically active even at low intensities; it can affect biological function in all living things — plants, animals, and people — both therapeutically and harmfully.
- Around 3 to 5 percent of the U.S. population — 10 to 18 million people — are affected by EHS, estimates say. That's more than have Alzheimer's, similar to the number with Long Covid.
- Other ills linked to wireless radiation by numerous peer-reviewed studies include heart and circulatory problems, neurological disorders, sperm damage, reduced fertility, sleep disruption, memory impairment, mental health issues, and more.
- One 2015 scientific review noted that "significant activation" by wireless radiation of the biochemical pathways that generate free radicals and oxidative stress could explain the "range of biological effects" from wireless exposures, giving them "a wide pathogenic potential."²
- A prior important meta-study by Dr. Martin Pall found that wireless radiation can activate voltage-gated calcium channels in cell membranes, leading to oxidative stress and cascades of biochemical reactions that can ultimately damage DNA.³
- Some major studies have found "clear evidence" linking wireless radiation exposures to certain forms of cancer. Despite a recent World Health Organization report concluding that cancer risk from wireless radiation is low, debate over this continues.⁴
- The exponential increase in wireless radiation around the globe also affects nature, with studies showing significant impacts, especially on birds, bees, and trees.

The more I have learned, the more it has seemed that the huge expansion of wireless tech worldwide is yet another inadvertent global experiment, with all living things as guinea pigs. Yet few seem to know about the growing body of science showing that wireless radiation poses [risks to health and environment](#).

Even fewer seem to know that U.S. safety guidelines for wireless devices are considered outdated and inadequate by many experts. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) still uses 1996 guidelines, a choice ruled "arbitrary and capricious" in 2021 by a federal court. This court ordered the FCC to redo its wireless safety guidelines decision, but as of early 2025, the agency had not done so.⁵ A number of [non-profit groups are working](#) to raise awareness of these safety gaps.

Did lax wireless safety standards contribute to my health crash? I've wondered this ever since one of my family members who'd suffered multiple concussions noticed how similar his ongoing symptoms were to mine. Just as he had to leave the soccer field after too many head traumas, did I experience too many exposures to poorly regulated wireless radiation, invisible head traumas that forced me off the digital playing field?

Whatever the case, I've found that avoidance — staying away from those digital fields as much as I can — has been the best strategy for reducing my symptoms. I've also been helped by ongoing detox efforts, diet changes, and genetic-analysis-based protocols that help my body better deal with oxidative stress and inflammation.

More than a decade after my 2012 health crash, I'm somewhat better — but still limited. My symptoms are milder now, but still get triggered if I spend more than a half hour or so in town. Travel is challenging — I don't fly, take trains, or use public transit, since doing so would put me in a metal

container full of wireless-radiation-emitting smartphones, plus WiFi. I no longer attend public events like live theater, lectures, and community meetings; any gathering of people these days is also a gathering of smartphones, too much wireless radiation exposure for me even if they're in airplane mode. Forget eating out for the same reason. Socializing only works if friends are kind enough to turn off their devices — sometimes a difficult ask in today's world.

On the other hand, I'm lucky EHS hit me in my late 50s, after I'd already been fortunate enough to travel extensively, enjoy many good restaurants, see my share of concerts, plays, and speeches live and in person, and attend — as well as throw — some great parties. I know that makes me luckier than most people in the world.

I'm also lucky to have found alternative ways to meet needs that I used to meet by using personal computers. I pay two wonderful helpers who access the web for me when I need it (and I now "need" it a lot less than I used to). This also insulates me to some extent from the worst aspects of the internet — online fraud and other crimes, the anxiety fostered by social media peer pressure, and the hostile comments encouraged by online anonymity. And I hope it means I'm now contributing less to the massive amounts of mining, energy use, water use, and other environmental impacts of digital technologies.

So despite my continued limitations, I've experienced upsides to getting kicked off the digital playing field. When I tell people I can't use computers or email, a surprising number respond: "You're lucky." Increasingly, I feel that way. If I ever completely recover from EHS, I'm doubtful I'd buy a computer or cellphone.

Apparently I'm not the only one who feels this way. Not long ago someone told me they'd spotted an unusual message on the back of a local truck. It read: **"No WiFi — Great Life!"**

Footnotes

¹ Here I am using "wireless radiation" to mean the type of radiation emitted by contemporary wireless devices and transmitters. This generally includes a range of frequencies in the Non-Ionizing ElectroMagnetic Radiation (NIEMR) portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, such as Radio Frequency (RF), MicroWave (MW) and Extra Low Frequency (ELF) radiation. Areas of ElectroMagnetic Radiation (EMR) are often referred to as ElectroMagnetic Fields (EMF or EMFs).

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26151230/>

³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23802593/>

⁴ https://www.niehs.nih.gov/sites/default/files/NTP_cell_phone_factsheet_jan_2024_508.pdf

⁵ For more on this read ["How the FCC Shields Cellphone Companies From Safety Concerns"](#) by Peter Elkind (ProPublica)

Healthier approaches to tech

As tech proliferates, more folks are finding that ditching devices — at least part-time — can have health and lifestyle benefits. The tips below can help keep tech from dominating your days and reduce potential health risks from wireless radiation and other EMR exposures.

- Don't carry devices close to your body, in pockets or bras. Instead, carry them in purses or backpacks and keep them off as much as possible.
- Consider storing devices in shielded pouches such as those used by some schools now restricting cell phones in classrooms.
- Turn wireless devices completely off when not in use, especially at night.
- Keep devices out of bedrooms; light from screens and wireless radiation both may disturb sleep.
- The best approach is to rely on corded or cabled connections — such as copper landline phones, Ethernet cables, or fiber optic cables straight to your computer.
- Try having “device-free days” for yourself or your family, or “device-free dinners” with family or friends. Turn all devices off and see how it feels.
- Engage in a “digital detox.” One good approach to this is described in the book *Less Screen More Green* by Kerry Crofton, PhD.

Some groups working to raise awareness of wireless risks

[Building Biology Institute](#) - See especially their [list of EMF consultants](#)

[California Brain Tumor Association](#)

[Cellular Phone Task Force](#)

[Clinical Electromagnetics Collective](#)

[DAMS](#)

[DarkSky International](#)

[Ecological Options Network](#)

[EMF Safety Network](#)

[Electromagnetic Safety Alliance Inc.](#)

[Electrosensitive Society](#)

[Environmental Health Sciences](#) - See especially [EMR, Health and Environment Project](#)

[Environmental Health Trust](#)

[Global Alliance for Brain and Heart Health](#) (aka Global Health Alliance)

[Golomb Research Group](#) (at UC San Diego)

[Grassroots Environmental Education](#) – See also [Americans for Responsible Technology](#)

[Massachusetts for Safe Tech](#)

[National Institute for Science, Law & Public Policy](#)

[Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility](#)

[Science Communication Network](#)

[Society of Environmental Journalists](#)

[Wilderness Watch](#)

For more information

www.SaferEMR.com

www.EMFAnalysis.com

[Wireless wake-up call](#) Jeromy Johnson | TEDxBerkeley

[Understanding EMFs Archive](#)

[Commission to Study The Environmental and Health Effects of Evolving 5G Technology](#)

Robert O. Becker, [Cross Currents: The Perils of Electropollution, the Promise of Electromedicine](#) (Tarcher, 1990)

Martin Blank, PhD, [Overpowered: The Dangers of Electromagnetic Radiation \(EMF\) and What You Can Do about It](#) (Seven Stories Press, 2015)

Kerry Crofton, PhD, [Less Screen More Green: Finding freedom with The Mindful Tech Plans™ – Revised and Updated Second Edition](#) (Kerry Crofton, 2024)

Kerry Crofton, PhD, [A Wellness Guide for The Digital Age: With Safer-tech Solutions for All Things Wired & Wireless – for brains worth saving](#) (Global WellBeing Books, 2013)

Devra Davis, PhD, [Disconnect: A scientist's solutions for safer technology](#) (New Voices Press, 2024)

Arthur Firstenberg, [The Invisible Rainbow: A History of Electricity and Life](#) (Chelsea Green, 2020)

B. Blake Levitt, [Electromagnetic Fields: A Consumer's Guide to the Issues and How to Protect Ourselves](#) (iUniverse, 2007)

Katie Singer, [An Electronic Silent Spring: Facing the Dangers and Creating Safe Limits](#) (Portal Books, 2014)

Katie Alvord (aka Kate) is an award-winning freelance writer whose work has appeared in a range of publications. In addition to her foundation board work, she has been employed by and has written for libraries, government agencies, and several NGOs. She is also the author of the book *Divorce Your Car: Ending the Love Affair with the Automobile* (New Society Publishers, 2000).