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Blog

The iPhone Radiation Warning Hidden in Your Settings

by **Heidi Ireland** on **May 26, 2026**

Most Australians carry their phone in a pocket. Tuck it into a bra strap. Drop it on the bedside table inches from their head at night. Use it as an alarm under the pillow. Take a call pressed flat against the ear.

The iPhone radiation warning sits in plain sight, in a setting most people have never opened. Every iPhone, every Samsung Galaxy and every Google Pixel includes the same body-distance guidance, written into the device by the manufacturer. Apple knows. Samsung knows. Google knows. The information has been there all along.

In the last year or two a lot of people have started writing about this. Most of the write-ups stop at "Apple has a warning". They skip the regulatory record, the manufacturer-specific test conditions, and the peer-reviewed research. This is the one which records.

Where to find the iPhone radiation warning

Take a minute and open this setting before you read on. It makes the rest of the article concrete.

iPhone. Settings, then General, then Legal & Regulatory, then RF Exposure. On older versions of iOS the path was Settings, General, About, Legal, RF Exposure.

Samsung Galaxy. Settings, then About phone, then Legal information, then Safety information. The full RF exposure language also appears in the Samsung Health and Safety document that ships with the phone.

Google Pixel. Settings, then About phone, then Regulatory labels and Safety information.

Each manufacturer says a version of the same thing. The phone was tested for radio frequency exposure with a small gap between the device and the body. The user is advised to use hands-free options like the speakerphone, wired headphones or other accessories, particularly during a call or when the phone is actively transmitting data.

None of the phones say "carry me in your pocket all day". None of them say "sleep with me under your pillow". The instruction is the opposite.

What iPhone separation distance means for your body

Every phone sold in Australia is tested for how much radio frequency energy the body absorbs when the device is transmitting. The measurement is called Specific Absorption Rate, or SAR. It is reported in watts per kilogram of tissue.

In Australia, ARPANSA administers the standard. The localised SAR limit for general public exposure to the head and torso is 2.0 W/kg averaged over 10 g of tissue, aligned with ICNIRP guidelines. The United States is stricter, at 1.6 W/kg averaged over 1 g of tissue. Europe and France use the 2.0 W/kg head and torso limit, with a separate 4.0 W/kg limb–worn limit.

Here is the part that matters. The tests are run with the phone at a specified distance from the body. For current iPhones the test gap is 5 mm. Samsung historically tested at 15 mm, though newer Galaxy models have moved closer. Google Pixel and most other manufacturers sit in a similar range.

Five millimetres is the thickness of a coin. Most pockets are tighter than that. A phone tucked into a sports bra is in direct contact. A phone held against the ear during a call is in direct contact. A phone resting on a chest while reading in bed is in direct contact.

The compliance figure on your phone's box assumes a gap that, in real life, almost nobody maintains. That is where the radiation warning is pointing at.

What regulators have found: the documented record

This is where most write-ups stop short. The history is worth reading in full.

World Health Organization, 2011. The International Agency for Research on Cancer classified radio frequency electromagnetic fields as Group 2B, meaning "possibly carcinogenic to humans". The same category contains pickled vegetables, aloe vera whole-leaf extract and gasoline engine exhaust. It signals limited evidence, not confirmed risk. It is still the current WHO classification, and the reason much of the research that follows exists.

Chicago Tribune, August 2019. A US newspaper commissioned an accredited independent lab to test SAR on phones from Apple, Samsung and Motorola at 2 mm separation, closer to how people actually use them. The findings made headlines. The iPhone 7 measured more than double the FCC limit. The Samsung Galaxy S8 came in above five times the limit. Apple disputed the methodology, arguing the lab did not use the manufacturer's test mode. Samsung gave a similar response. The FCC opened an investigation, retested the phones at the manufacturer-specified distances, and announced compliance in December 2019. The story prompted several US class-action lawsuits.

ANFR France, September 2023. France's radio frequency regulator, the Agence Nationale des Fréquences, tested the iPhone 12 in body-worn conditions. The body-contact SAR result came back at around 5.74 W/kg, above the European 4.0 W/kg limb–worn limit. On 12 September 2023, ANFR ordered Apple to halt iPhone 12 sales in France. Apple released a software update (iOS 17.1) within a few weeks that adjusted how the phone modulates power on contact with the body. France lifted the suspension. Belgium and Germany flagged similar concerns.

Three reference points. One global classification. Two regulatory cases. None of them speculative, all of them documented in the public record.

What peer-reviewed research says about phone radiation

According to PubMed, the evidence base sits in four parts:

What is established. A 2019 study in Health Physics measured radio frequency exposure across 55 residential devices in homes in Belgium and France. The conclusion was direct: mobile phones, due to their close to the body, represent the bulk of the residential RF exposure most people receive. Smart meters, Wi-Fi routers and Bluetooth devices contribute, but the phone in the pocket is the dominant individual source (Aerts et al., 2019).

What modelling shows about children. A 2019 paper in Physics in Medicine and Biology modelled SAR in head models of Korean males aged 6, 9, 11 and 22. The result: at typical mobile-use frequencies, the peak spatial-average SAR in the brains of the 6 and 9 year old models was between 62% and 125% higher than in the adult models. Thinner skulls, smaller heads, more absorption. This is biophysics, not a disease claim. It is also the reason every major paediatric health body recommends children use speakerphone or hands-free options (Lee et al., 2019).

What in vitro research has begun to find. A 2023 paper in the journal Mutagenesis exposed human peripheral blood mononuclear cells to mobile phone radiation (UMTS signal, 1.0 W/kg SAR) for 16 hours. In cells from older participants (mean age 69), the researchers observed a statistically significant increase in DNA damage compared to controls. This is a cell-culture finding, not a human health outcome. It tells us nothing about cancer or any specific disease in living people. It does tell us that the effects of long-duration exposure at the upper end of regulatory limits remain an active area of research (Milsk et al., 2023).

What is unresolved. A 2019 review of the broader literature noted that studies on heart rate, sleep, cognition, blood pressure and mood under RF exposure have produced inconsistent results. Some show effects. Some show none. The research is live. The picture is incomplete (Magiera and Solecka, 2019).

The honest position is this: the exposures are real and measured. The regulatory limits are conservative and based on a separation distance most people don't maintain. The long-term human evidence is unsettled. The iPhone radiation warning, and its Samsung and Google equivalents, exist for that combination of reasons.

Free steps to reduce your phone radiation exposure

The Earthing Oz EMF protection framework runs in three layers. Reduce. Block and Filter. Reduce is where you start. It is free, fast, and changes the exposure profile immediately. It is also where most people hit a ceiling, because modern life has plenty of EMF you cannot switch off.

Six changes any phone owner can make this afternoon:

1. **Off the body when it transmits.** Speakerphone during calls. Phone out of the pocket when streaming, downloading or on a long video call. The phone draws hardest when it is transmitting, and most heat ends up in the tissue closest to the antenna.
2. **Aeroplane mode at night.** The phone stops transmitting. The alarm still works. Notifications, background syncing and Wi-Fi–dependent features sleep until morning, along with you.
3. **Distance is the simplest lever.** Radio frequency intensity drops sharply with distance. Across the bedroom is meaningfully different from the bedside table. The bedside table is meaningfully different from under the pillow. You don't have to be perfect, just further.
4. **Wired beats wireless.** Wired earphones over Bluetooth earbuds when you listen for hours. Ethernet to the laptop where you can. Wi-Fi off at the router overnight if your household runs cold on smart home dependencies.
5. **Hands free on a call.** Speakerphone where you can. Holding the phone away from the head reduces brain SAR. The paediatric SAR studies are about brains that are still developing, but the geometry applies to every head.
6. **Check the kids' phones too.** Same setting, same paths above. The biology of a growing brain absorbs more energy. Worth a conversation, not a panic.

Reducing your exposure is a really great first step.

EMF protection: what behaviour can't reach

Reduce changes what you control. It does not change what your neighbours, your school, your office, your smart meter or your phone tower do. Half the EMF in a typical Australian home comes from sources outside your behavioural reach. That is what Block and Condition are built for.

Block: SafeSleeve

Block is the physical shielding layer. **SafeSleeve** is the brand Earthing Oz has stocked for years for phone and laptop shielding, because the engineering holds up to scrutiny. The cases are built around exactly the test gap manufacturers assume and most people can't maintain. A shielded flap on the front of the case redirects RF away from the body-facing side, with independent SAR testing published for each model.

In practice, the SafeSleeve case is doing the work the 5 mm test gap was supposed to do, around the clock, in the places phones actually live. The pocket. The bra strap. The back of the jeans on a long walk. The bedside table while the alarm runs. The hours of body-adjacent phone time add up fast. So does the protection.

The full **SafeSleeve range for iPhone and Galaxy** sits in the **EMF Protection** category on Earthing Oz, alongside **laptop shields**, **anti-radiation cases for tablets**, and **Faraday-shielded sleeves**.

Filter: Blushield

Condition is the layer that addresses what shielding cannot, which is the ambient electromagnetic environment of the rooms you actually live in. The neighbours' Wi-Fi. The smart meter on the wall. The mobile tower three streets over. The mesh network that does not switch off because you switched off yours.

Blushield is the brand Earthing Oz stocks for the Filter layer. Developed in New Zealand and refined over more than two decades of research, Blushield products emit a low-intensity scalar field designed to support the body in environments saturated with electromagnetic activity. They run continuously in the background. They are not a shield and do not block the signal. They work in parallel with it.

The range spans **portable units** that travel in a bag or pocket, **plug-in models** for the bedroom and home office, through to larger units for whole-home or property coverage. For households in apartments, dense suburbs, or anywhere within range of smart meters and 5G infrastructure, Blushield is the layer that does the work behaviour and shielding can't reach.

Three layers, working in parallel

Reduce, Block and Filter are not steps on a ladder. They are three layers, designed to run together. Reduce changes what the phone does. Block changes what reaches the body. Filter changes the environment the body lives in. The households that take EMF most seriously run all three.

The full **EMF Protection** sits on Earthing Oz. If you want to see how to measure what's actually in your home before you change anything, the **How to Measure EMR** Learn page walks through the meters we use.

Frequently asked questions

Where is the radiation warning on an iPhone? Settings › General › Legal & Regulatory › RF Exposure. On older versions of iOS the path was Settings › General › About › Legal. RF Exposure. The setting is on every iPhone sold in Australia, with similar paths on Samsung Galaxy (Settings › About phone › Legal information › Safety information) and Google Pixel (Settings › About phone › Regulatory labels and Safety information).

Is it safe to keep an iPhone in your pocket? Apple tests iPhones at 5 mm separation from the body, the thickness of a coin. Most pockets sit tighter than that. The Earthing Oz EMF protection framework recommends keeping the phone off the body during transmission, with speakerphone or wired earphones during calls. A shielded case like SafeSleeve is the practical answer when keeping the gap isn't realistic.

What is the iPhone SAR limit in Australia? ARPANSA's standard, aligned with ICNIRP, sets a Specific Absorption Rate limit of 2.0 W/kg averaged over 10 g of tissue for general public exposure to the head and torso. The US FCC limit is stricter at 1.6 W/kg averaged over 1 g. iPhones sold in Australia must meet the ARPANSA limit at the manufacturer-specified separation distance.

Does Samsung have the same warning? Yes. Samsung Galaxy phones include the same body-separation guidance in their Safety information, accessed via Settings › About phone › Legal information. Google Pixel and other major manufacturers follow the same pattern. The Chicago Tribune's 2019 SAR investigation found the Samsung Galaxy S8 exceeded the FCC limit when tested at 2 mm.

Has any regulator found iPhone radiation above the limit? Yes. France's ANFR ordered Apple to stop iPhone 12 sales in September 2023 after body-worn SAR testing returned around 5.74 W/kg, above the EU limit. Apple released iOS 17.1 to address it and the suspension was lifted. The case is the clearest recent example of a regulator acting on the body-contact gap.

Is sleeping next to an iPhone dangerous? The research is unsettled, but the warning Apple writes into the phone advises against keeping the device in direct body contact during transmission. The simplest reduction is aeroplane mode at night. The alarm still works. Transmission stops. For broader bedroom EMF including Wi-Fi and external sources, Blushield is designed to support the body in environments where the signal stays on.

What does IARC say about mobile phone radiation? The World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer classified radio frequency electromagnetic fields as Group 2B (possibly carcinogenic to humans) in 2011. It remains the current classification. Group 2B signals limited evidence, not confirmed risk. The same category contains pickled vegetables and gasoline engine exhaust, which gives an idea of the breadth of the classification.

How do EMF protection cases work? Shielding cases like SafeSleeve include a conductive flap that covers the body-facing side of the phone. Independent SAR testing shows the cases reduce measured exposure on that side. They do not work the manufacturer-assumed separation to do, all the hours the phone is on your body in pockets, bra straps, handbags, and on bedside tables overnight.

The warning was always there

The iPhone radiation warning is not new. It is not a fringe finding. It is written into every iPhone and Samsung Galaxy sold in Australia. The regulatory cases are documented. The classifications are public. The research is live.

What is new is that hardly anyone reads the setting. Apple buried it three menus deep. Samsung buried it in a document most people throw out with the packaging. Google does the same.

Open Settings. Open Legal & Regulatory, or About phone. Read what your phone says. Then decide what to do with it.

Sources

- Apple iPhone, RF Exposure setting (Settings › General › Legal & Regulatory › RF Exposure). Verify exact current wording from your own device.
- Samsung Galaxy, Safety information (Settings › About phone › Legal information › Safety information) and the printed Health and Safety document.
- Google Pixel, Regulatory labels and Safety information (Settings › About phone).
- ARPANSA Radio Frequency Standard RPS 5–1
- World Health Organization, IARC Monograph 102 (2013)
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