

Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity

In recent years, many individuals have reported a variety of health problems associated with exposure to [electromagnetic fields](#) (EMFs) from sources such as radio and TV broadcast transmitters, [cellular telephones](#), [base stations](#), [computer monitors](#), household electrical appliances and wiring, light bulbs, power lines, and automotive electrical systems. Symptoms commonly reported include headache, fatigue, nausea, ringing in the ears, digestive disorders, skin redness and burning sensations. These physical and/or psychological symptoms, usually appearing at exposure levels tolerated by the general public, have been generally termed "electromagnetic hypersensitivity", or EHS.

At levels normally encountered in our daily lives, EMFs are unperceived by our senses. While the symptoms attributed to EHS conditions are real, numerous scientific studies to date have failed to demonstrate that they are actually associated with EMF exposure. In studies where subjects were intentionally exposed to EMFs, most individuals were unable to detect whether EMFs were present or not, or showed symptoms which did not correlate with their actual exposure condition.

The causes of these symptoms are unclear. There are suggestions that they might arise from environmental factors unrelated to EMFs (e.g. "flicker" from fluorescent lights or glare and other visual problems with computer monitors). Other possible factors include poor indoor air quality, stress in the workplace or living environment, pre-existing psychiatric conditions, or stress reactions arising from 'worrying' about EMF health effects.

There are only a limited number of studies looking at treatments for perceived EHS symptoms. Some studies have suggested that cognitive behavioural therapy has some success in alleviating concerns of patients towards exposure to low intensity EMFs. Current evidence indicates that other treatments for EHS symptoms such as shielding, supplementary antioxidant (vitamin) therapy and acupuncture have yielded no significant success.

In summary, it is the opinion of Health Canada that there is no scientific evidence that the symptoms attributed to EHS are actually caused by exposure to EMFs.