

HEALTH ALERT OVER TODDLERS WHO HAVE THEIR OWN MOBILES

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DANGER: Experts warn of long term health risks.

CHILDREN as young as three have been given a mobile phone despite the potential health risks, a study revealed yesterday.

Almost a quarter of three to six-year-olds use handsets and by the age of 15 almost every child has their own mobile.

However, experts warn there may be long-term health risks from exposure to emissions ([pulsed](#) [1] [2] [3]).

Children are thought to be most at risk because their thinner skulls make [them more likely to absorb radiation from the phones.](#)

Research by the website moneysupermarket.com revealed the extent to which mobiles have become must-have gadgets for youngsters.

In a survey of 1,000 parents, it found more than half of **children under the age of 16 regularly use one.**

Some parents give their children handsets at a very young age. More than 13 per cent of parents with three-year-olds said their youngster had used a phone. Among three to six-year-olds, the figure was 23 per cent.

By secondary school, about 94 per cent of children had their own phone.

Most parents place restrictions on how much their children spend on calls and texts.

Three-quarters said they only allowed their youngsters pay-as-you-go phones to avoid them running up huge bills. But only 36 per cent of parents questioned said they stopped their children from accessing the internet on their mobile and just under a third barred them from calling premium rate numbers.

But over two-thirds said they did nothing to stop their children downloading ringtones and screensavers that cost up to £3.50 each.

Rob Barnes, head of mobile phones at moneysupermarket.com, said: "Buying a mobile phone for your child can provide peace of mind, as it makes them easily contactable. But there are factors parents should consider.

"Take heed of warnings regarding internet access and look into whether filters can be placed on your child's mobile to bar access to specific sites.

"Buying your child a mobile phone is a difficult decision, and I believe there has not yet been enough development in the market to offer sufficient protection."

Scientists admit long-term mobile phone use could have serious health risks.

A £9million study published in September found no evidence of a link between short-term use and brain cancer.

But experts behind the research said it was too early to know the health consequences of using a handset for more than a decade.

The Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme did not tackle this issue and it may be years before the results of a separate £6million study into the effects on children are known.