



Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity

The scientific evidence does not establish that EHS symptoms are caused by exposure to low-level electromagnetic fields.

What is Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity?

Some individuals have reported a wide range of non-specific health problems that they attribute to low-level exposure of electromagnetic fields (EMF). The symptoms most commonly reported include headaches, body pain, lethargy, tinnitus (ringing in the ear), nausea, burning sensation, heart arrhythmia and anxiety. The collection of these symptoms is not part of any medically recognised syndrome.

It has been suggested that environmental factors unrelated to EMF may be responsible for the symptoms, such as poor indoor air quality, excessive noise, flickering fluorescent lights and glare from visual display units (VDUs).

This presumed sensitivity to EMF is termed 'Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity' or EHS, which in medical literature is also known as *idiopathic environmental intolerance attributed to electromagnetic fields* (IEI-EMF).

Are the symptoms related to EHS caused by exposure to low-level EMF?

While the symptoms are real and can have disabling effect for the affected individual, EHS has no clear diagnostic criteria and the science so far has not provided evidence that EMF exposure is the cause.

The majority of scientific studies published to date have found that under controlled laboratory conditions, EHS individuals cannot detect the presence of EMF sources any more accurately than non-EHS individuals. Several studies have indicated a placebo effect i.e. an adverse effect due to the belief that something is harmful.

What does ARPANSA advise?

On the basis of current scientific information, there is no established evidence that EHS is caused by EMF at levels below exposure guidelines.

ARPANSA acknowledges that the health symptoms experienced by the affected individuals are real and can be a disabling problem, and advise those affected to seek medical advice from a qualified medical specialist.

ARPANSA remains actively engaged with the EHS community, researchers and medical specialists in this area. It has established the Electromagnetic Energy Reference Group (EMERG) which includes representatives from the community, the Chief Medical Officer of Australia, various academic and government organisations and other stakeholders.

ARPANSA will continue to review the research into potential health effects of exposure to EMF in order to provide accurate and up-to-date advice.