

# I'm allergic to modern living'

By LIZ HULL - Last updated at 15:29pm on 22nd March 2007

For most people talking on a mobile phone, cooking dinner in the microwave or driving in a car is simply part of modern living in 21st century Britain.

But completing any such tasks is impossible for Debbie Bird - because she is allergic to modern technology.



The 39-year-old is so sensitive to the electromagnetic field (EMF) or 'smog' created by computers, mobile phones, microwave ovens and even some cars, that she develops a painful skin rash and her eyelids swell to three times their size if she goes near them.

As a consequence, Mrs Bird, a health spa manager, has

Debbie and her husband Tony often sleep in a silver-plated mosquito net.

transformed her home into an EMF-free zone to try and stay healthy.

The walls are all covered in special carbon paint, the windows have a protective film on them and she and her husband, Tony, 45, even sleep under a silver-plated mosquito net to deflect the radiowaves.

'I can no longer do things that I used to take for granted,' Mrs Bird said last night. 'My day-to-day life has been seriously affected by EMF.'

'I don't own a microwave. I don't use mobile phones at all. I can't even use a cordless phone. We have a plasma screen TV because the old style one gave out gamma rays, which brought on my

reaction.

'I can't even get in my friend's BMW. If I do I immediately start getting a headache and my head starts tingling.'



Debbie Bird's eyelids swell to three times their size when she is exposed to microwaves.

'Even shopping is a problem. I can't go in places like Starbucks where there is Wi-Fi broadband and always have to be aware of my environment.'

Mrs Bird first realised that she was electro-sensitive when she moved with her husband, a writer and environmental consultant, and their eight-year-old daughter, Antonia, to a new apartment in Bowden, near Altrincham, Greater Manchester.

Unbeknown to her, however, her neighbours were all using wireless internet connections and had cordless phones.

'At first I couldn't sleep,' Mrs Bird added. 'Then I started developing a skin reaction. I had a burning sensation down my face, on my forehead and elbows. I looked like I had

been severely burnt on my forehead.

'I felt very tired all the time and my eye-lids would swell up to three times their size.'

Mrs Bird was referred to a skin specialist, but the problem was so severe the couple decided they had no option but to move to a new home, in nearby Hale, Greater Manchester.



Debbie's home is a radio-wave free zone. A clear protective film has been put on the windows and the walls have been redecorated with a special carbon paint.

They took electromagnetic readings of the property and set about making it safe. The house was completely re-wired, had clear protective film put on the windows and every wall was painted with black carbon paint, which cost £250 per tin, to deflect the harmful rays.

All the couple's bedroom curtains are also silver-plated and they sleep under a silver-plated mosquito net, which also protects against radiation.

Although the renovation was not cheap, Mrs Bird said it was worth it. Her skin rashes have gone and she no longer has trouble sleeping. Officially in the UK, electro-sensitivity (ES) does not exist as a medical condition.

Doctors say there is little scientific evidence to back up a link between EMF and poor health. They claim the symptoms, often attributed to flu or viruses, are psychosomatic.

But campaigners disagree. They reckon around 500 people are already being treated for ES and as many as five per cent of the population could be affected.

Rod Read, director of Electro-Sensitivity UK, said: 'I have seen hundreds of people who exhibit symptoms they directly attribute to the electrical items around them.

'But it is a politically incorrect illness, the Government or electronic companies don't want people thinking their mobile phones or microwaves are dangerous.

'In the past doctors have dismissed symptoms as something like flu, but the pathology is now established. It has a huge detrimental physical effect and stops people living normal lives.'