

Tech Tips for Seniors

How Data Reach Your Mobile Phone

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Whether it is sending an E-Mail message, making a phone call, viewing a website or watching a video, all of us who use mobile phones dabble in data every day.

Even our voice is converted into data as it leaves our lips, travels miles away and arrives next to the ear of someone who answers our phone call.

All of that data travels to and from your phone via a worldwide network of cell towers and satellites.

Every word we speak and every letter we type on a mobile device is converted into data, a long string of 0s and 1s, before it speeds to its destination.

That string of numbers travels at the speed of light across the Internet to its destination ... another cell phone, a computer, landline phone, tv set and anything else connected to the Internet. An explanation of how that happens is way beyond the scope of this web page.

All we need to know is that cellular data (which is transmitted via cell towers) costs money. The more cellular data you send and receive with your mobile phone, the more it costs.

Mobile phone companies don't count or charge extra for the data used for voice phone calls or text messages. They only count and charge for

the amount of data you use when you send E-mails, access websites and watch videos on your phone.

When you purchase a mobile phone you have to decide how much data to buy. That could be a specific or an unlimited amount of data.

But wait! I have an Internet (Wi-Fi) connection at home, at work and at a friend's house. Do I have to pay for data when I use my mobile phone there?

No. When you are connected to the Internet in those locations you aren't using cell towers. An unlimited amount of data are transmitted through satellites and eventually through a wire from the street to a router/modem in your house.

Those Wi-Fi connections are paid with a monthly subscription to our local

communications companies ... Comcast or Verizon. The cost of an Internet subscription is based on the speed of the data transmission, not the amount of data used.

Here's a tip: When you are near an Internet (Wi-Fi) connection, it is wise to turn off "cellular data" on your phone.

When you are at Generations, I can show you how to connect your device to the Wi-Fi network in the building. Generations pays that Wi-Fi bill as a service to its members.

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If you have questions about any of this, feel free to make a "Technology Tips" appointment on Tuesday mornings at Generations, when the center opens. Just call the main number: 215-723-5841.

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