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# Tiny windmills could power future smartphones (maybe)

[Mobile device](#) makers have a few options for improving battery life. They can cram huge [batteries](#) into phones and tablets. They can improve the efficiency of chips, wireless modules, and screens. Or they can wait for battery technology to get better... which could take a while (although there are some [advances in battery tech on the horizon](#)).

Another approach is to let you recharge your battery on the go without stopping to plug in your device. Some companies already offer solar-powered smartphone cases, but fully recharging your phone with solar power can take days.

University of Texas Arlington researchers have a different idea: windmills. [Tiny, tiny windmills](#).

Smitha Rao and J C Chiao designed a tiny windmill that's just 1.8mm thick at its widest point. You can fit 10 windmills on a grain of rice, or hundreds on a typical smartphone case.

Need a bit of extra juice for your phone? Just hook up a case with all of those windmills and wave it around in the air for a few minutes, or stick your phone out the window of your [moving car](#) to pick up some wind.

Odds are your arm would get tired or [your car](#) ride would finish before your phone was fully charged. But it might not take as long if you just need to generate enough juice to make a quick phone call in an emergency.

The little windmills are made from a durable nickel alloy and have been shown not to break under strong winds.

UT Arlington is working with [WinMEMS Technologies](#) to find commercial applications for the technology. At this point I haven't seen details about just how much energy one of these little windmills generates or how many you'd need to actually keep a phone charged for a reasonable amount of time. But if the technology advances it could pose an alternative to solar power or hand cranks in some situations.

via [Gizmodo](#)

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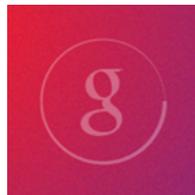
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