

A LITTLE COPPER GOES A LONG WAY

Although our bodies require only a small amount of copper—the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of copper is 0.9 milligrams per day for adults—its contribution to human health is undeniable and as essential as calcium, iron and zinc.

As a nutrient present in our bodies from conception, copper helps to form a developing infant’s heart, skeletal and nervous systems, as well as arteries and blood vessels. For this reason, expectant mothers should increase copper intake to at least 1 mg per day; a nursing mother’s RDA is 1.3 mg (not to exceed 8 mg per day).

Copper continues to play a vital role in our bodies as we age—keeping our hair and skin in good condition while repairing and maintaining connective tissue in our hearts and arteries. It also facilitates absorption and utilization of iron and enables cells to use the energy present in carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

A lack of intake or improper balance of copper, iron and zinc can result in poor copper status, which over time may lead to heart and circulatory problems, bone abnormalities and complications in the immune system. A consistent, well-balanced diet that contains a variety of foods will assure you’re getting the right amount of copper and other essential nutrients on a daily basis. Seafood, nuts, whole grain products, wheat bran cereals, organ meats (such as liver), raisins and chocolate are all dietary sources of copper.

More information on copper and health is available at the Copper Development Association’s *Copper In Your Home* Web site under “Environment and Health” at www.copper.org/copperhome. **Cu**