

Think your diet both rich in fibre and rich in copper

Most people today know that fibre is good for our bodies, but it is not so strange that few people know that our bodies also need copper. Not until 2001 did research show that 20 enzymes in the body depend on copper to function properly. Only then did we begin paying more attention to copper in our diet and copper content in various ingredients to try, once and for all, to put a number to the need, recommended allowance and maximum intake, explains Lena Hulthen, Professor at Sahlgrenska University Hospital and adviser for the Swedish National Food Administration.



New analysis methods have made this possible, but the recommended intakes of copper still vary. Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2004 published its fourth edition, with updated information on copper in April. Its figures were obtained with support of the Swedish National Food Administration and others. It sets the recommended daily allowance at 0.7 mg and the minimum allowance at 0.4 mg/day for adults. For its part, the Scientific Committee on Food recommended a maximum daily allowance of 5mg for adults.

“These numbers and values are not something most healthy people need to think about,” says Lena Hulthén. “The only thing you need to remember is that our bodies need copper. If you are in a period of growth - pregnancy, for example - it is extra important to eat food that is rich in copper, so that the foetus is able to build up his/her own copper reserves. If you suffer from anaemia or if you are tired and out of sorts, this could be a sign of copper deficiency.”

“There is also another example: when you are older and want to prevent osteoporosis. In that case, in addition to calcium, you need to be sure to get enough copper, which strengthens connective tissue, maintaining the skeleton’s elasticity and resilience,” Lena Hulthen adds.

Another way ensure you get enough copper can be to eat foods that are rich in fibre – which often means rich in copper - alternating between a sprinkling of grains, nuts, fibre-rich fruits and vegetables. Extra rich in fibre as in copper are cocoa, liver and seafood such as shellfish, oysters and fish. But other foods such as dark green vegetables like spinach and commonly available mushrooms are also rich in copper.

“By beginning your day with well-composed muesli, fibre-rich bread with a topping that is equally rich in fibre and a glass of juice, you are sure to get off to a good healthy start,” Lena Hultén concludes.

If you know that you are not eating a well balanced diet, you can make sure you get the right copper supplement by taking a multivitamin with minerals which can be purchased at any pharmacy. It must, however, contain copper, iron and zinc, so you get the right mineral balance.

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