

# copper

By Christi Hanson

NEXT TIME YOU'RE OFFERED A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, YOU MIGHT TRY TAKING ANOTHER FORM OF COPPER TO KEEP YOUR MIND SPRY—AND PERHAPS PROTECT AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE



## Alzheimer's disease (AD)

is a neurological disorder that strikes the areas of the brain primarily involved with thought, memory and language. While there is no definitive way to stop it, that isn't keeping researchers from searching for the key to prevention—and that key may be copper.

Copper intake might benefit people with mild to moderate AD, concluded German researchers in a study published in the September 2005 *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. "Low copper in blood correlates with cognitive decline in patients," says the study's lead researcher Thomas Bayer, PhD.

Adding copper to the diets of mice with Alzheimer's prevented premature death, normalized a key enzyme that protects against cell damage and lowered levels of Abeta peptide, a hallmark of Alzheimer's, explains Bayer, who is also the chair of the division of neurobiology at Saarland University Medical Center in Homburg, Germany. "We are running a human clinical trial ... and we hope to see the same benefits as in the mice," he says. Presently, 15 patients have

finished the double-blind phase, during which they were given 8mg a day of copper orotate (an organic copper salt). "So far, [there have been] no adverse effects in patients receiving it for more than 12 months," Bayer says.

But supplementation alone won't keep AD away. "Sound dietary practices, much like the diets proposed for cardiovascular disease, are associated with some retardation of AD onset," explains David Morgan, PhD, director of the Alzheimer's Research Laboratory at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

"My opinion is that there is a minimal amount of copper intake that is required to avoid disease," Morgan adds. Both Bayer and Morgan advise caution about copper supplements, however, as excess intake can result in liver toxicity. "My suggestion is to take a daily vitamin and mineral capsule. Most of these contain copper," Morgan says.

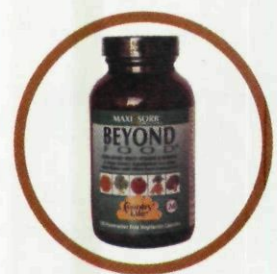
Meanwhile, at last there's some encouraging AD research. But until there's a remedy, the best way to potentially ward off disease is to eat healthfully with a little copper on the side. □



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