

Dietary copper may ease heart disease

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Including more copper in your everyday diet could be good for your heart, according to scientists at the University of Louisville Medical Center and the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center. Their studies show that giving copper supplements to mice eased the stress on their over-worked hearts by preventing heart enlargement. The study will be published online on March 5th in *The Journal of Experimental Medicine*.

Insufficient copper intake is associated with increases in cholesterol levels, clot formation, and heart disease. The new study found that feeding mice copper relieved heart disease and restored proper heart function, even when the animals' hearts were continually stressed. Stressed mice that were not given copper supplements suffered heart failure. The copper-rich diet increased the production of a protein that promotes the growth of new blood vessels, although exactly how this protein might aid heart recovery is not yet clear.

The human equivalent of the beneficial dose of copper used in this study is about 3.0 mg/day. The current recommended daily intake for humans, however, is only 0.9 mg/day. Increasing copper intake, especially in those pre-disposed to heart disease, might thus be an easy way to reduce the mortality rate associated with this condition.

Source: Journal of Experimental Medicine

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