



Press Release

October 2003

Copper, Essential for a Healthy Baby

On the eve of the Week for the Promotion of Infant and Family Health and of the BabyBoom Fair, the European Copper Institute would like to remind parents and infant care specialists of the importance of copper in supporting the growth and development of the infant. The effects of a copper deficiency are most serious when they arise in young children.

Did you know that copper is an essential mineral, in particular for the foetus and for children? **It has a role to play in a great many of our bodily functions.** It ensures the normal functioning of the brain, nervous system and cardio-vascular system, carries iron, boosts bone growth and strengthens our immune system. For some time now, physicians have been emphasising the body's need for copper, in particular by highlighting the example of Menkes disease. This rare genetic condition is characterised by a copper deficiency that has irreversible effects on development. Indeed, this condition is often fatal in early infancy.

The essential role played by copper in infants is well known. Premature babies and children with a low body weight, or who suffer from malnutrition or severe diarrhoea, are most likely to develop a copper deficiency. This condition can also affect children who do not have an appropriate diet. A copper deficiency can have serious consequences including problems when treating anaemia, bone anomalies, weakening of the immune system, an increase in incidence of respiratory infections and more.

Several recent studies conducted on animals look likely to prove that a copper deficiency, however slight, can also have serious consequences on in utero development, such as spontaneous abortion, malformations and anaemia. Tests on rats have demonstrated that administration of a copper supplement during both the gestation and nursing periods could restrict the damaging effects of nicotine in terms of the development of the lungs. Some further studies involving humans suggest that there might be a similar correlation for the human foetus. It is for this reason that it is so important to monitor copper intake during pregnancy through a healthy, balanced diet.

Our bodies need regular doses of copper to remain in good health. According to the World Health Organization, from available data on human exposures worldwide, there is greater risk of health effects from deficiency of copper intake than from excess copper intake. The National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America has fixed the recommended daily dose of copper at 0.9 mg per day for adults, 1.0 mg/day for pregnant women and 1.3 mg/day for breastfeeding women.

The European Copper Institute is a joint venture set up by the world's copper producers and Europe's semi-finished product manufacturers. Our aim is to educate and promote the important benefits that copper provides for modern society across Europe. Please don't hesitate to consult our website at <http://www.eurocopper.org>.

The Week for the Promotion of Infant and Family Health is an initiative of the French Community of Belgium. It will take place from 1 to 7 October 2003 and is being organised by the Patient Education Centre.

The BabyBoom Fair is to be held at the Heysel Centre in Brussels from 10 to 12 October 2003.

* * *

Information Christian de Barrin, Communications Manager <i>European Copper Institute</i> Tel.: + 32 2 777 70 82 cdb@eurocopper.org	Press contact Michel Grossmann, Senior Account Executive <i>Ogilvy Public Relations</i> Tel.: +32 2 545 65 47 michel.grossman@ogilvy.be
---	---