

If you have any questions, ask your physician or registered dietitian.

Nutrition for Wilson Disease

Wilson disease is a genetic disorder that prevents your body from removing extra copper. This causes copper to build up in your liver and/or brain. Copper is a nutrient your body needs, but too much of it can cause problems. This handout will cover copper in your diet and what people with Wilson disease should do.

What to know about copper in your diet

You need copper to stay healthy. It is in some foods and some nutrition supplements, like vitamins and supplement drinks. The recommended dietary allowance for copper is 0.9 milligrams (mg) a day for most people. People with Wilson disease may need to limit foods with a lot of copper since their body cannot remove extra copper. There is not a recognized recommended amount of copper for people with Wilson disease, so we ask you to stay within 0.9 mg per day, the same amount for most people.

How to limit copper

If you have Wilson disease, your care team may recommend that you limit foods with a lot of copper. While it is important to be mindful of your copper intake, you do not need to avoid it completely. You should try not to eat very high sources of copper including organ meats, shellfish, cashews, cooked mushrooms, and dark chocolate. Be mindful of the serving sizes of other copper-containing foods.

At first, your physician may prescribe medication to lower the amount of copper in your body. This medication is very important and you should take it as prescribed. Your care team may ask you to limit foods with a lot of copper. Later, as you have less copper in your body, it may be safe to eat some foods with higher amounts of copper. Follow your physician's or registered dietitian's recommendations.

Limit these high-copper foods in your diet

Foods you should not eat

Food item	Serving size	Amount of copper
Liver (all animals)	3.5 ounces	7.35 to 19.3 mg
Lobster	3.5 ounces	1.35 to 1.55 mg
Oysters	3.5 ounces	4.46 mg

Foods you should limit

Food item	Serving size	Amount of copper
Cooked mushrooms	1/2 cup	0.89 mg (varies)
Cashews	1.5 ounces or 2 tablespoons of nut butter	0.95 mg
Baking chocolate	1 ounce	0.94 mg
Crab	3.5 ounces	0.81 mg

Foods you can eat, but watch the amounts

Food item	Serving size	Amount of copper
Soy products such as edamame, tofu, tempeh	1/2 cup	0.20 to 0.35 mg
Beans*	1/2 cup	0.45 to 0.67 mg
Seeds	1/2 cup	0.37 mg
Nuts**	1.5 ounces or 2 tablespoons of nut butter	0.35 to 0.58 mg
Dark chocolate (70 to 85% cacao)	1 ounce	0.20 to 0.60 mg
Shrimp	3.5 ounces	0.38 mg
Snails	3.5 ounces	0.40 mg
Quail	3.5 ounces	0.51 mg

*Black beans and navy beans have the most copper.

**Peanuts, almonds and macadamia nuts have less copper. Most other nuts have a moderate amount. Limit eating cashews, which are high in copper.

Copper in a vegetarian diet

Vegetarian diets focus on eating mostly plants and some animal products, depending on what you like to eat. Many vegetarian sources of protein also have copper, including nuts, beans and soy. If you eat a vegetarian diet or if you do not eat any animal products (including eggs and dairy), work with a registered dietitian to get a safe nutrition plan.

Other sources of copper

Check food labels for copper content. Not all labels have copper content. Check the labels of vitamin and mineral supplements to see if they contain copper.

Copper can be found in cookware and water. Do not use copper cookware, especially those that are unlined, cracked or flaking.

Check your tap water for copper. Use water testing strips that test for copper. Ask your clinicians if you have questions about where to find these.

Zinc

Zinc affects how much copper your body absorbs. Zinc can be found in foods, but it is not known how zinc from food affects Wilson disease. Eating foods with zinc cannot replace zinc medication for Wilson disease treatment. The zinc used for Wilson disease treatment is a medication prescribed by a physician.

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