

COPPER IN MISSOURI DRINKING WATER

Copper is a reddish metal that is widely distributed in nature. It is an essential element for all known living organisms, including humans and other animals.

Food naturally contains copper. You eat and drink about 1 milligram of copper every day. Copper is necessary in your diet for good health. Even normal amounts of copper adversely affect individuals with Wilson's disease or a glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency.

At high concentrations, copper is a gastrointestinal irritant and may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and sometimes a metallic taste. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established an action level of 1.3 milligrams per liter (mg/l) copper in drinking water. This action level was based on human clinical case studies.

Copper most often gets into drinking water from corrosion of copper pipes & fixtures. The following measures can be taken to lower the copper content of drinking water:

- Let water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the faucet has been unused for more than six hours.
- Use cold water for cooking and drinking, as copper is more likely to dissolve in hot water.

Tests on more than 1,600 public water systems in Missouri show a copper corrosion problem in less than 1% of the systems.

For more information on copper testing or if you have other questions on copper in drinking water, call the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Public Drinking Water Branch at 573-751-1406.

