**Copper Jewelry: The History, Benefits, and Designers.**

**Article by Ben Michael Voisey.**

For thousands of years, copper has been used for medicinal purposes. An Ancient Egyptian medical book named “The Smith Papyrus” suggests that copper is a remedy to sterilise chest wounds and clean water to make it suitable for drinking. Nowadays, copper bracelets are still quite popular. One of the main reasons being that the ancient Greeks' use of copper bracelets to treat arthritis has influenced the (many) later generations to continue with this “trend”. Copper has been demonstrated to be an essential micronutrient for our blood, muscles and joints. Large doses of copper orally can lead to many negative side effects, however the use of a bracelet is much below the threshold that would be required for any of these side effects.

However, the Greeks may have used this method, but there is no scientific or clinical evidence. A 2013 study fulfilled by Dr. Stewart Richmond and then reviewed by Debra Rose Wilson, Ph.D shows us that there is “no good evidence that they reduce pain and/or inflammation” and that here is “strong evidence they do not have any clinical effect.” Whether the people using these copper bracelets were experiencing the placebo effect, or they just were more luck than others, we may never know. Dr. Richmond says that “people who suffer with rheumatoid arthritis may be better off saving their money, or spending it on complementary interventions such as dietary fish oils which have far better evidence for effectiveness.”

Another thing the Greeks believed is that copper could help with cardiovascular illnesses such as copper deficiency. Good news, however, is that science shows that there are strong links between copper bracelets and a lower blood pressure, therefore eliminating the issues bought along with cardiovascular illnesses that cause high blood pressure.

Many people still make art out of copper. For example, an indie business named “Aura Luna” produces products of all sorts, and copper and crystal jewelry is one of those many products. According to them, copper is a material that is easy to melt down and recycle, which could be something that can help our global warming crisis. They also say that it is a good conductor of energy, and that is why you find it commonly in wires in your house, such as your earphone cables and plugs. Copper is also a durable substance that doesn’t deteriorate, meaning that jewlers that put their effort and time into making copper jewelry can rest assured that their products won't break within a few minutes of use.

Many modernists like to work with copper. It is easy to mass-produce items using copper, especially in older times such as the 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s. Artist Jerry Fels and his brother in law Kurt Freiler not only made copper jewelry but also developed a coating for it named “Copron” which would eliminate the pesky fingerprints that would be left on the material, and also limits tarnishing and defacing from oils that are commonly found in fingerprints.

Copper contains chemicals that cause enzymatic chemical reactions which positively impact the body's own chemistry. The copper must come into contact with skin for this to happen, and it must be in contact with the oils and acids on the skin, therefore coated copper won't provide these health benefits. When the copper is in direct contact, the micro-nutrients found inside it will enter the bloodstream as copper salt. It is important to use pure copper which is defined as 99.9% copper, and trace elements of tin and zinc. This has not been medically disputed.

Copper also possesses anti-oxidants which prevent free ions from raising toxicity within the body, which causes the look of aging. It does this by improving the density of elastic fibers. In doing this, copper slows the aging process not just on the outside on your skin, but on the inside meaning you don't just look younger, you physically feel younger.

Another amazing health benefit of copper is that it is antibacterial. Copper can destroy the growth of microbes, fungi and bacteria (this includes E Coli). Using copper can widely improve the immune system, prevent infections, improve wound healing and speed up the healing process of tissues. The U.S EPA actually finds that copper is the only solid material that can kill bacteria that pose a threat to human health.

One of the downsides is that copper isn’t that affordable. For example, Jen Lesea’s range of copper and silver products can cost in the hundreds. Jen is an indie designer, and when she was a girl, she was fascinated by collecting rocks and sea shells along the coast. When she designs, she takes these traces close to heart. She taught herself smithing, which is amazing! It really goes to show that anyone can learn anything at any age if you put effort into it.

Will Nevins-Alderfer is another example of an amazing example of someone who had put the time and effort into learning smithing and manages to create some beautiful products with it. Will was intrigued by the effects of copper after his Metalsmithing professor at Earlham College taught him about something called Mokume-gane, which is a hollowware made using an ancient Japanese fusing technique. In an interview with the Copper Development Association Inc, he says that “It is super unique! There is only one other guy in Maine that I have noticed doing this”.

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