

# **My Frightening Experience: Copper Toxicity Mimics Many Illnesses, Including Depression**

by Laurie Pisciotta

Earlier this summer, I felt sad, negative, and uninterested in socializing. I was not sleeping well and reasoned that stress and overwork must have brought on a relapse in depression. I was fearful that my antidepressant – the only antidepressant that has ever helped me – had stopped working. Gradually, over several weeks I developed a troubling array of physical symptoms I have never experienced before: extreme physical exhaustion, muscle weakness, and mental fog. I was too weak and tired to do daily tasks like cooking, washing my hair, or sitting at a desk. My primary care physician ordered three rounds of bloodwork looking for mono, tick-borne illnesses, thyroid imbalance, bacterial infections, STDs, Covid-19, vitamin deficiencies, and metabolic disorders. All test results came back within normal ranges. Days of being immobilized on the couch turned into weeks, and ultimately two primary care physicians gave up on trying to find the cause of, and remedy for, my illness. I felt frustrated and terrified. Something was legitimately wrong; this wasn't just in my head.

Left to figure this out on my own, I took stock of my daily habits: sleep/wake cycle, exercise, eating nutritious plant-based foods, and work/life balance. I had recently started to lift weights and started taking a green powder nutritional supplement for athletes. The green powder is supposedly sourced from whole plant foods and mixes with water or juice to create a comprehensive daily dose of vitamins and minerals. As a runner and weightlifter, I hoped the supplement would boost my energy and speed muscle recovery. Just to rule it out, I stopped taking it for a week or so. I felt a little better, but not 100% well. I doubted the supplement could really cause me to feel so bad, so I started taking it again. Over the course of two or three weeks, my health plummeted. That's when I realized that the green powder mix was in fact the culprit. But why?

The green powder supplement contains copper. I happen to be one of those rare individuals who is genetically predisposed to copper sensitivity. Whole foods that naturally contain some copper are not a problem, but any amount of copper in supplement form wrecks my health. It predictably triggers depression like clockwork, and as I have gotten older, it also causes brain fog and physical fatigue. The longer I am exposed to copper, the worse I feel. What's concerning is that a blood test for copper toxicity would not convey any cause for alarm because my levels always fall

within the normal range. And that's what makes people like me so special: we are so sensitive to copper that even a little extra is problematic.

Within a month of discontinuing the green powder supplement, I felt myself again. I regained my mental and physical health and have a renewed gratitude for my health. I wrote to the manufacturer of the supplement to share my experience and encourage them to remove copper from their product. They never replied.

I share this story to urge every medical and behavioral health professional to ask patients and clients about copper supplementation (as well as testing for mono and tick-borne illnesses) on their intake forms *before* diagnosing or writing a prescription for an antidepressant. I encourage everyone to consider copper sensitivity if you experience depression, physical weakness, or brain fog. It's crucially important that we disclose all supplements to our healthcare providers. Lastly, I encourage people to rethink the safety of the copper intrauterine device (IUD). You may not know you are sensitive to copper until you have an IUD implanted, and the consequences might be profound. Lastly, please consult your provider before adding or stopping any medications or supplements. Wishing you all good health.

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