

# COPPER TOXICOSIS IN DOGS

What Every Dog Owner Should Know  
**Early detection saves** lives.

## What is it?

- Copper is an essential mineral, but too much accumulates in the liver and causes damage.
- Also called: Copper Storage Disease, Copper-Associated Hepatopathy.
- May be genetic or diet related.
- The liver cannot excrete excess copper properly - > builds up -> inflammation -> liver failure.

## Early Detection

- **Routine blood panels (ALT liver enzymes) can flag early liver stress**
- Ask your vet about liver panels at annual wellness visits.
- Keep a journal of subtle behavior changes – share with your vet.

## Treatment Options

- **Copper-chelating meds:** D-penicillamine – binds to the copper to help the body remove it.
- **Zinc supplementation:** Blocks copper absorption (maintenance/prevention).
- **Supportive care:** IV fluids, anti-nausea meds, liver supplements (SAME, milk thistle/silymarin).
- **Prescription diet:** Low-copper hepatic diet — avoid organ meats, shellfish, beans, potatoes.

**"Treatment is lifelong. Consistency is key."**

## Symptoms to Watch For

- **Dogs often hide this illness until it is too late**

## Late-Stage Signs

- Lethargy / low energy
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Drinking more water
- Jaundice
- Vomiting

If you see ANY of these signs, seek veterinary care.

## Diagnosis

- Physical exam & full history
- Blood work – liver enzyme panel
- Abdominal ultrasound
- Liver biopsy (measures copper concentration) -> the only definitive test

## Monitoring & Long-Term Care

- Blood work every 3-6 months to track liver enzyme trends.
- Repeat liver biopsy may be recommended (typically 12-24 months after treatment begins)
- STRICT diet management – read ALL food and treat labels.
- Avoid high-copper supplements, vitamins with copper
- Track your dog's energy, appetite, and weight at home.
- Maintain a log to share with your vet.

Tip: Ask your vet about copper-restricted prescription diet formulated for liver support.