

Antimicrobial Copper at the Head of the Class

Bacteria can be kept at bay with copper in the classroom

Walk through any of our nation's schools and what do you see? Smiling faces and skinned knees. Runny noses and high fives. Friends chatting around the lunch table, or working hard over a lab table. Kids being kids, healthy, sick or somewhere in between. Schools are laboratories for growing young minds, but are also laboratories for growing and transmitting all sorts of infections illnesses.

That's why we just can't be too careful when it comes to germs in schools. Eighty percent of illnesses are spread by contact, which means that when someone touches a door handle, handrail or faucet, they are leaving behind bacteria to be picked up by the next person who touches that surface. Frequent hand washing is the best way to prevent spreading bacteria, but it is not a common practice among children—or many adults—with great regularity.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists five factors that are conducive to the spread of disease-causing bacteria: crowding, contact, contaminated surfaces, compromised skin (i.e. cuts and scratches) and lack of cleanliness. All five of these elements are present in almost every school on a daily basis.

Frequently touched surfaces in schools can be breeding grounds for bacteria. One way to combat this is to make those touch surfaces inherently antimicrobial. This can be achieved easily with copper. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has registered more than 280 copper alloys as antimicrobial, recognizing that they begin decreasing contamination immediately, and kill 99.9 percent of bacteria within two hours.*

Clinical trials in three U.S. hospitals, where frequently touched objects, such as bed rails, IV

poles, and nurse call buttons, are made of copper rather than stainless steel, aluminum or plastic, are now entering the next phase where they will try to identify the impact of this change on reducing infection rates.

In schools, surfaces that are commonly touched by everyone, such as door handles, push plates, handrails and faucets, can be made from antimicrobial copper, brass and bronze. The natural tones of the EPA-registered alloys range from red to yellow to silvery gray and the choice of textures and finishes are almost limitless. When using antimicrobial copper, design and aesthetics do not have to be compromised.

"Copper is the perfect antidote for any public facility, particularly for schools where germs can thrive," said Andy Kireta Jr., vice president of building construction for the Copper Development Association (CDA). "We see a lot of copper used for a building's exterior and piping and mechanical systems where beauty, durability and reliability are important. Add to that copper's antimicrobial action and it makes it a no brainer for application on interior surfaces and products."

With antimicrobial copper touch surfaces, no action other than standard cleaning is required of the custodial staff, and nothing other than good hygiene practice is required of the students. For more information, please contact www.antimicrobialcopper.com. **HPN**

*Laboratory testing shows that, when cleaned regularly antimicrobial copper kills greater than 99.9% of the following bacteria within two hours of exposure: vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE), methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Enterobacter aerogenes*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *E. coli* O157:H7