

ANTIMICROBIAL COPPER: BREAKING THE CHAIN OF INFECTION

Architects and designers have a key role to play in designing infection out of our hospitals and public spaces, and now they have a new ally: Antimicrobial Copper.

Antimicrobial Copper is the umbrella term for over 450 copper alloys – including brasses, bronzes and copper-nickels – with proven efficacy against headline-making germs, including ‘hospital superbugs’ such as MRSA, norovirus and *E.coli*. While these can survive on other materials for days, weeks, even months, they are rapidly destroyed on Antimicrobial Copper.

Touch surfaces made from Antimicrobial Copper work continuously – day and night, between touches and cleans – providing a more hygienic environment and improving patient safety.

Research into Antimicrobial Copper’s efficacy has been peer-reviewed and published, with stringent testing carried out to support an official registration with the US Environmental Protection Agency as an antimicrobial material. A recent trial shows that by incorporating Antimicrobial Copper elements into just six key objects in Intensive Care Unit rooms, healthcare-associated infections can be more than halved.

York Health Economics Consortium has assessed the cost-efficacy of this simple intervention, estimating a return on investment of less than two months when comparing the small additional cost of copper alloy components with the savings made through fewer infections.

The substantial evidence base, together with a growing supply chain, has led to installations in healthcare facilities and beyond, in areas where people gather and infections can spread, such as train stations, airports, care homes and schools. Antimicrobial Copper is durable, and since its antimicrobial properties are intrinsic to the metal, they last the lifetime of the product, unlike coatings, even if subject to knocking and scratching. At end of life, the products are also 100% recyclable, contributing to sustainable design.

Antimicrobial Copper is available in a range of colours to suit all design themes – from the rich reds of high coppers, through the warm golden-yellows of the brasses, to the silvery-whites of nickel silvers. These colour choices can help designers create a warmer, more soothing, healing environment and reduce contamination and thus infection risk.

Priority surfaces to upgrade include door furniture, worktops, hand rails, lift interiors, light switches and taps. To help specifiers identify efficacious products, the Cu⁺ mark is awarded to approved companies offering Antimicrobial Copper products, through an industry stewardship scheme.

It’s a new way of thinking, a different mindset: specifying an effective and durable antimicrobial material for hygiene-sensitive environments to help break the chain of infection and curb the spread of disease.

Visit www.antimicrobialcopper.org/uk/architect-designer to:

- View case studies, specification guidance and news.
- Browse the Antimicrobial Copper Product Directory.
- Keep in touch – sign up to our newsletter to be entered into a draw to win a Tom Dixon Cog Pen.

