“20 years of fatigue — gone!”

Samantha Gilbert, 39, was tired, foggy and anxious. Then she discovered the often-missed culprit and the simple fix

“Please forgive me, Jennifer, but I can’t make it. I’m not feeling well.” Samantha sighed as she clutched the phone, fearing her friend’s reaction. “Jennifer and I had planned a girls’ weekend months earlier to celebrate her birthday. Yet the day before our trip, I backed out because I was so exhausted. I felt awful letting her down, and though she didn’t show it, I understood, I could tell she was disappointed. She wanted to know what was going on really good, but I was too embarrassed to tell her I was just very sleepy.

Tired all the time

“That wasn’t the only time I bailed on my friends. Once, we had tickets to see Coldplay, one of my favorite bands. When we got there, I was already wiped out after driving for two hours, navigating the crowd and climbing to our seats. I was grateful to finally sit, but when the band started to perform the song “Fix You,” I was overcome by emotion. I thought about how my life needed to be fixed, but there seemed to be no end in sight. All of a sudden, my heart was racing, I was sweating and I couldn’t breathe. I was having an anxiety attack. I couldn’t bear to stay, but I didn’t want my friends to know how I was really feeling, so I told them I got a stomach flu and had to go home. “Soon I decided it would be better not to get into situations like that, so I began turning down offers to go out with friends. And eventually, they grew tired of my declining invites, so they stopped calling.

“The exhaustion affected my work too. I was a fashion designer and on my lunch hour, I often snuck out to a secluded area in my office to lay on the couch and sleep. But sometimes I overslept, only to be woken by my boss. It was mortifying.”

“It wasn’t just that I was tired either. I also suffered from brain fog, depression and anxiety, digestive problems, joint issues, skin rashes, headaches, insomnia and mood swings.”

“I decided to become a vegetarian and later a raw vegan in hopes that I’d feel better. I lost 50 pounds and even left the fashion industry to become a nutritional therapist. I felt good for a while, but then my symptoms came back with a vengeance. Even if I slept 10 or 11 hours, I was still tired. For a year, I scaled back my work hours, fired off my savings and stayed in bed most of the day. I gained back 18 pounds.”

“I saw more than 35 practitioners and spent about $40,000 to get to the bottom of my ailments. It was a long and frustrating journey and I was devastated that no one could give me an answer.

Energy at last!

“My turning point came when I found an old medical journal buried under a stack of papers in my office. I flipped through it and read an article about the research of Dr. William Walsh, a leader in brain health and nutritional medicine. I read about fatigue, hormonal imbalances in women and something called copper overload. I learned that copper affects dopamine and norepinephrine, neurotransmitters linked to depression and anxiety. A light bulb went off and I thought, ‘That’s me.’

“I looked on Dr. Walsh’s website and found two doctors who specialized in the condition. I immediately called them, and a few days later I flew out to Chicago for an appointment. I was nervous and skeptical since I had tried everything and nothing had worked. As I sat there, I asked myself, Why should this time be any different?”

“Yet it was. After taking a health history, the doctors told me they suspected I had copper overload. They ordered a hair and blood test, confirm it, but I had to wait a month for the results. “When the results arrived in the mail, I ripped open the envelope and read the words ‘elevated copper.’ I fell into my chair. I was relieved to have an answer but I cried for days thinking about how long it took me to find it. “I went on a copper elimination diet and took out all nuts, seeds, seafood, avocado, dried fruit, chocolate and mineral water. I also started taking copper supplements, including molybdenum, selenium, vitamins C and B12, biotin and zinc. I added B12-rich foods like grass-fed red meat and I quit taking my multivitamin, which had a lot of copper in it. Within two to three months, I was feeling better. Within a year, my symptoms completely disappeared. I had more energy than I’d ever had in my life. And those extra 18 pounds? They melted right off.”

“I was amazed at how just a few small changes could have such a profound impact on my life. In fact, as a result of my experience, I expanded my business (SamanthaGilbert.com) to help others with copper overload.

“Now I wake up at 5 AM and exercise 5 or 6 days a week. My friends want to meet me, I love it. In fact, Jennifer and I recently spent a weekend in San Jose shopping, eating out and spending time with friends. I’m energetic, happy and relaxed. I’m the person I was meant to be!” — as told to Julie Revuelta

One-minute QUIZ

IS A SNEAKY MINERAL OVERLOAD MAKING YOU TIRED?

If you suffer from frequent fatigue and two or more of the symptoms below, a copper buildup that your body can’t process may be to blame:

- Headaches
- Mood swings
- Brain fog
- Sleep problems
- Skin breakouts
- Thinning/shedding hair
- Anxiety
- Frequent infections

News

This mineral cuts depression risk by 76%

Getting healthy amounts of zinc in your diet can do more than help relance copper levels and restore high energy—zinc also protects against depression.

Researchers reporting in the Journal of Affective Disorders found that women with low intakes of zinc were up to 76 percent more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms than those who got the highest amounts of zinc. Though the scientists have yet to determine exactly how zinc protects against blue moods, previous studies indicate that the mineral boosts brain levels of the feel-good brain chemical serotonin.

80% OF WOMEN suffer from free copper overload

“Up to 8 in 10 women who come to see me are suffering from an overload of ‘free copper’ that’s draining their energy,” says copper authority Dr. Michael Lassen, M.D. “Since most mainstream physicians don’t recognize the condition, it goes undiagnosed in at least 50 percent of cases.” Gitterman explains that copper is critical to energy production, but the body can only use it after it’s chelated, or bound up, with a free copper carrier in a bioavailable form. “When the liver’s ability to produce bioavailable copper leads to copper deficiency and excess. Cells don’t get usable copper while free copper builds up to impair function of energy-regulating glands.” The result? Fatigue, fog, anxiety and mood swings.

Top culprits: diets high in copper and low in zinc (which converts free copper into its bioavailable form)

“Stress can also be a major cause,” adds Lassen. In fact, a 2013 study published in the Uni Key Tissue Mineral Analysis Test ($152, UniKeyHealth.com) reveals that when you send in a hair sample, you receive a detailed report and phone assistance for interpreting results.

Upping zinc intake is key. Gitterman advises eating 3 daily servings of zinc-rich foods like beef, fish and poultry and supplementing with 20mg of zinc. Also critical: limiting crust, lobster, oysters, beans, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds, soy, avocados, black tea and other foods high in copper.

And if you take a multivitamin, make sure it’s copper-free. One to try: Life Extension One Per Day, $22 for 60 tablets, LifeExtension.com.