

Killing Germs for Life

WOMAN'S NEAR-FATAL BATTLE WITH MRSA INSPIRES
HER COPPER-BASED PRODUCT WITH NATURAL SANITIZING POWER

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

I'VE BEEN a serious germaphobe ever since COVID in 2020. I travel everywhere with masks and hand sanitizer.

I spoke to Marcia Reece about her line of Staywell® Copper products, which—sadly for her—were important for her to invent. Staywell Copper products are a result of her life-threatening bout with an unexpected Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infection.

Here is her encouraging story.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): What is your background, and how did your health emergency lead to inventing the Staywell Copper product line?

Marcia Reece (MR): I'm a lifelong inventor and entrepreneur originally from the small farming town of Washington, Iowa, now living in Scottsdale, Arizona. Many people know me best for inventing Sidewalk Chalk back in 1981—a product that brought creative fun to millions of children and continues to be a childhood staple today.

I've spent my entire career creating innovative, practical products that improve everyday life. But nothing prepared me for the health emergency that would change everything.

After a routine outpatient surgery, I contracted a severe and unexpected MRSA infection—a superbug that nearly cost me my life. As I fought to recover, I became obsessed with

understanding how germs spread so easily and what could be done to stop them safely, naturally and effectively.

I had six surgeries, final rites twice, and had to learn to walk again ... all because of germs I got in a hospital!

That research led me to the time-tested power of copper. Used by ancient civilizations for its germ-fighting properties, copper kills bacteria and viruses on contact without chemicals, reapplying or batteries. With my product development background, I saw an opportunity to bring copper into modern life through practical, portable tools.

That's how StayWell Copper was born. From our Hand Roller to our Phone Patch, every product is designed to help people stay healthy by harnessing copper's natural antimicrobial power, killing 99.97 percent of germs on the germiest things we touch all the time.

What began as my personal mission to protect myself has grown into a broader movement to help others stay well, too.

EGT: When did you start this business?

MR: Research and testing began in 2016, product focus testing in 2017, and we first began selling on Amazon in August 2018.

EGT: What are the properties of copper that enhance sanitization and healing?

MR: Antimicrobial copper has remarkable natural properties, making it a powerful tool for both sanitization and healing. What makes copper so

"I had six surgeries, final rites twice, and had to learn to walk again ... all because of germs I got in a hospital!" —MARCIA REECE



unique is that it's inherently antimicrobial.

Scientific studies show that copper can kill 99.97 percent of harmful bacteria, viruses, and fungi on contact—often within minutes—by disrupting their cell membranes and interfering with their genetic material. Unlike chemical disinfectants, copper never wears out, doesn't require reapplying and works continuously as long as it's in use.

In addition to its germ-fighting capabilities, copper has been shown to support the body's natural healing processes. It plays a key role in the formation of new blood vessels, promotes collagen and elastin production, and has anti-inflammatory benefits that can aid in skin repair. These properties are why copper is sometimes used in wound dressings, compression garments and even skincare products.

At StayWell® Copper, we've harnessed these benefits into everyday tools—simple, portable products helping people stay healthier naturally, without chemicals or side effects.

EGT: How many prototypes did it take before you got to the versions you are selling today?

MR: Between four and eight prototypes were sent to a carefully selected focus group for input on size, ease of use, weight, and so on.

EGT: Where are the Staywell Copper products sold?

MR: StayWell Copper products are available online through our website, and on Amazon, where customers can read verified reviews and enjoy fast, convenient shipping.

Our products appeal to consumers and health-conscious businesses who seek natural, chemical-free ways to stay protected. Because our products are portable, durable and never expire, they've become especially popular with travelers, health care workers, teachers, parents and anyone who's looking for an easy, effective way to reduce everyday germ exposure.



StayWell Copper products are designed to utilize copper's natural antimicrobial power, killing 99.97 percent of germs on surfaces.

EGT: Please tell us about the various items.

MR: Our patented Hand Roller is a sleek, pen-sized tool that clips easily on your keys, zipper pull or purse. Just roll it between your hands or over frequently touched surfaces. It kills germs on contact—no sprays, wipes, or reapplying needed.

The Halo Necklace is the Hand Roller put on a 30-inch, beaded copper chain so you can wear it around your neck and always have it close and ready for easy use. We named this the Halo Necklace as it kills 99.97 percent of germs on contact, but copper is the only metal with a “halo effect”—meaning it will kill 70 percent of germs within a 16-inch radius.

The Phone Patch, which is self-sanitizing, adheres to the back of your phone—one of the dirtiest items we touch all day. It works silently and continuously to reduce microbial buildup.

The DogTag Charms come in a key clip, 6-inch beaded chain or 30-inch beaded chain. All attach to the things you touch the most.

EGT: Have you done any crowdfunding? Any “Shark Tank” aspirations?

MR: I'd love to do this, but we haven't done either so far. Kevin Harrington, the original “Shark” from “Shark Tank,” does have both the Phone Patch and the Hand Roller, loves and uses them. I have a short video he did, endorsing the products.

EGT: Are Staywell Copper products patented?

MR: Hand Roller is patented.

EGT: What has been your biggest obstacle in product development?

MR: Funding has been our biggest problem. While StayWell Copper products are currently available on Amazon, we've faced some frustrating challenges on the platform that many small, U.S.-based businesses will relate to.

Despite having a high-quality, American-made product with a proven track record and strong customer reviews, we've encountered issues like counterfeit listings, unauthorized resellers and shifting algorithms that make it difficult for customers to consistently find our genuine products.

After COVID hit, we struggled with Amazon's policies around natural health products. Even though copper's antimicrobial properties are well documented and supported by scientific research—including Environmental Protection Agency registration as an antimicrobial metal—Amazon often restricts or suppresses natural solutions in favor of chemical-based products,

making it harder for customers to access chemical-free options like ours.

EGT: Do you have any encouragement for novice inventors?

MR: Yes, I do—and I say this from decades of experience as an inventor: Don't give up! If you have an idea that solves a real problem or makes life better in some way, pursue it with everything you've got.

The road from idea to market is rarely smooth. There will be setbacks, naysayers and learning curves. But persistence is your most valuable tool.

I've invented over 100 products, and my ideas don't come from a lab. They come from observing real life and taking action.

Trust those instincts. Surround yourself with smart, supportive people. Ask questions. Be humble enough to learn and brave enough to take risks.

And remember: Some of the most world-changing products started with one person, one idea, and a whole lot of determination. 🍀

Details: staywellcopper.com

Edith G. Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000 (edietolchin.com/portfolio). She is the author of several books, including "Secrets of Successful Women Inventors" (<https://a.co/d/fAGlvZJ>) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing" (<https://a.co/d/8dafJd6>).



The patented Hand Roller, which clips easily on your keys, zipper pull or purse, kills germs on contact.

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Best wishes, Jack Lander



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