

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 137: A Holistic Rx for Keeping Your Whole Family Healthy with Dr. Madiha Saeed

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is brought to you by Vivos. This is something we recently invested in for our entire family and we are absolutely loving it and here is why. So, data shows that the nutrition we receive in utero determines our palate development and how narrow or open our airway and jaw structure are. So a narrow mouth, jaw and airway increase the chances of needing braces, of getting sleep apnea, breathing difficulties and much more. But it was pretty much assumed that your jaw structure was set in stone once you were born or for sure after the first couple of years of life. But Vivos has found that not only is this not true, but they created a non-invasive, non-surgical, easy way of widening the maxilla, the jaw and the airway. So for our kids, this means that they get to avoid the braces that my husband and I both had and for my husband, this means his sleep apnea has disappeared and he stopped snoring, which is a bonus for me. I'll be writing more about this soon but you can check them out, in the meantime, at wellnessmama.com/go/vivos

This podcast is brought to you by Dry Farm Wines. This is the only wine I drink anymore. After researching and finding that many other wines contain added sugar, dyes like ultra vita-mega purple and filtering agents including fish waters, egg whites and some other unsavory ingredients. And things like sawdust to improve the taste. But the Dry Farm part is important too. What this means is that the grapes are not irrigated. Without the water, they don't get as big or as sweet, yielding higher nutrient and lower alcohol wines naturally. Their wines are lab tested for purity and to make sure that they are free of even trace amounts of pesticides and herbicides. And they are all sourced from small family dry farm vineyards all over the world. I absolutely love their wines and I find them to be less expensive than other high-quality wines. And Wellness Mama listeners can get an extra bottle of wine for a penny at wellnessmama.com/go/wine.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Healthy Moms Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and you are gonna love my guest today as much as I do. Madiha Saeed is an MD, she's a board-certified integrative holistic family physician, which is a mouthful and amazing. Online, she's known as Holistic Mom MD, her articles are regularly published by "Holistic Primary Care Magazine". I see her all over the internet, but they refer to her as an emerging voice for the next generation of holistic physicians. She writes for the Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine. She is the director of the education spokesperson for Documenting HOPE, which is a national organization dedicated to healing chronic disease in child, which is such an important topic.

And she's also the author of the best selling book, "The Holistic RX", which offers the readers with one or more chronic health conditions or symptoms easy to follow advice on how to deal with them, especially in children. She's an amazing beacon of really good wisdom online, and I'm so excited to have her here today. Madiha, welcome and thanks for being here.

Madiha: Oh, my God. It is such an honor, I can't wait. This is so much fun. Thank you so much.

Katie: Thank you for being here. I think, like I said, I think that the listeners are really gonna love you because you are giving super practical advice for moms who are dealing with issues with their children or with themselves. And I think that your approach is so good. I got a chance to read your book, and I love that you really start with inflammation. Which it feels like is an often overlooked but super important part of health. So let's start there. Let's talk about inflammation and what it can cause in the body.

Madiha: Absolutely. And this is something... you know, I graduated residency in 2010. Immediately then, I...you know, me myself had multiple chronic issues. I had, you know, hypothyroidism, Hashimoto's--so an

autoimmune antibody--seborrheic dermatitis, acne, severe fatigue, brain fog, weight gain, digestive complaints, like severe constipation, irregular period. So I felt like I was a mess. And even doctors, even though I was going through the conventional medical system, going to rotation to rotation, every time I would go to my doctors, I was just thrown medications or told them that it's just in my head. Or even just that I am a new mom, a new resident, and a new wife all at the same time. So, which could have been obviously, you know, adding to that problem, but I knew there was something else.

So when I joined this medical practice, there was me, an OB-GYN, an internist, an exercise physiologist, nutritionist counseling, chiropractor, massage therapy, acupuncture, acupuncture, homeopathy, all under one roof, brought together for complete healing of the whole person, a concept that was really foreign to me at the time. And I had never even heard the word holistic since... in 2011, I didn't even know what holistic was. And I then when... with all of these amazing practitioners, I was brought up to speed with what conventional medicine had left behind.

My brother is an interventional cardiologist, my sister is a pediatric ICU physician. I have psychiatry, I have all of these specialists, you know, in every field, in my family let alone, and none of us were taught a single class of nutrition or even how to deal with the underlying root cause of inflammation. We all know that these chronic symptoms are...these chronic diseases have one underlying root cause and that's inflammation. And just by targeting the root cause of inflammation, you can not heal one chronic symptom but you can heal all of them simultaneously. Which is mind-boggling, because when I had... one of my first patients was a 31-year old with nine autoimmune diseases.

Myasthenia gravis, psoriasis, lichen planus, Sjögren's, Hashimoto's, you know, severe depression, anxiety, fatigue, you know, all of these chronic symptoms. And on top of that, she worked at the Family Dollar store and the gas station. So she's not...it's not like she had a lot of money, but she knew when she was determined to find another way. And when she came to me, she was on the highest dose in one of her medications and she was gonna go to Imuran, which is another terrible medication. But just by addressing her root causes of inflammation, not one of those symptoms disappeared, all of them. And so one month she had 50% resolution of symptoms and in seven months, she no longer had the diagnosis of Myasthenia Gravis and on any of our other chronic conditions. Which was crazy and blew my mind.

So once I was able to heal myself, then I went on this search to find the answers even further to see, you know, what is going on and how I can actually implement it? Because as a family physician, I see diseases of every stripe. And starting from one place at least gives people hope. And especially for people that are, you know, who can't afford tons of testing and a place to start. So...and there's two, and I can go on a little bit more about inflammation. So inflammation actually means like a fire inside, and something we're all really familiar with. You know, it's that life-saving reaction that occurs when your body's immune system is trying to fight off all these infections and helps heal injuries and protects you from diseases.

But the thing is, you know, for chronic diseases, we're taught that, okay, here's a problem, here's a pill, right? But we all know that inflammation is because when you have eczema, it gives you an anti-inflammatory. So...but that kind of inflammation that we're talking about is actually called chronic inflammation. And there's two types. So there's acute inflammation, which is like a good inflammation. It lasts for a short time, you know, a few seconds to a couple of days, it serves a healthy purpose. Yay, it's like your body's working well. But what happens with chronic inflammation of all these diseases is that it's also referred to as systemic inflammation, or bad inflammation, as I call it with my kids. So it gradually destroys this magnificent

masterpiece that we were born with.

It's like a hidden, smoldering, painless fire that is created by our immune system as it tries to fight off life's daily exposures to triggers, like unhealthy food, you know, chronic stresses, toxins, allergens, overgrowth of like these bad bugs, and even low-grade infections. So that is really, really key in healing chronic disease. If we heal the chronic inflammation because this chronic inflammation for a short time, you know, it's okay. But what happens is, you know, there's...all these triggers can cause an increase in the release of inflammatory molecules of your immune system called cytokines. Cytokines are really important in fighting off infection and cancers, and they help your body distinguish between friend and foe.

So when properly functioned, the fire remains contained. But what happens with constant, constant exposure to these triggers, the inflammatory cytokines go crazy and out of control and in overdrive and try and destroy everything in its path, leading to your chronic symptoms of every stripe. If it goes to your knees, it can cause arthritis, if it goes to your brain it can cause autisms, schizophrenia, bipolar, you know, all of those conditions, depression. Then if it goes to your thyroid, it can cause thyroid diseases. If it goes to your stomach, it can cause digestive complaints. Skin, it can cause eczema, psoriasis, and acne. So all of these things are really, really key in triggering any underlying root cause of all your chronic symptoms.

Katie: That makes perfect sense. And I wanna jump into your approach in a minute because I got a chance to read your book and I think your approach is really awesome, and you make it really doable for moms. It doesn't seem overwhelming or too complicated, and I love your approach. But I'd love to touch a little bit more on why do you think we're seeing so much more inflammation? Because, at least from the questions I'm getting on the blog and from readers I've talked to, like this seems to be a much more widespread sort of problem than it was for certainly our grandparent's generation but even our parent's generation. Like, what do you think are some of the underlying causes of all these extra inflammation right now?

Madiha: I know, it is crazy. And that's what's really scary is that one out of every second child now has a chronic illness. And that's just mind-boggling in and of itself, but the thing is these...if we continue at the current trajectory, one out of every four children will have autism by 2033. That's crazy. You know, even if we continue the current trends, even one in every, you know, three children born in 2000, the year 2000 will develop diabetes over their lifetime. And this increase of rates of chronic illness is a direct outcome of an increase in inflammation. So targeting these specific pieces will also help to slow this process down.

There's genes, they say genes, this entire study that is so fascinating, it's called epigenetics. And this is a study of the change on our gene function without the physical mutations of the DNA structure. The genes may load the gun but the environment pulls the trigger. So our diseases, our medication, our internal, external environment, lifestyle, digestive health, all of these things, including nutrition, toxin, stresses, exercise, sleep, all of that can alter how our genes are expressed. Literally, turning genes on and off. So that is...so these changes can be passed on down to offsprings. So if you have...you know, if a mother has lots of chronic illness, it can be passed down through your genes. Even though genes can now be changed and altered, we are getting altered nutrition.

There's a lot more, you know, 80% of the food in the United States contains genetically modified, you know, GMOs. So that's crazy, and it's full of chemicals and artificial colorings that impairs the gut microbiome that causes problems. There's also like excessive hygiene. You know, we're getting...and if you look at everything, everything is Clorox this and clean this up, and make sure this is 99%, you know, bacteria, kill all the bacteria.

But we don't want that because that then...what happens is that, you know, germs help you build the immune system. So helping our families, you know, to keep, because if we kill off all those things, it restricts the growth of your immune system.

So that's another factor that's causing all these problems. In conjunction with, you know, we're cleaning everything up but we're putting more toxins in our environment. We're surrounded with all these toxins that actually over time is very difficult for our liver to get rid of and accumulates over, you know, accumulates and accumulates and shifts our immune system to have more inflammation, making your body more prone to developing these allergies and chronic conditions. Then there's another piece of the puzzle, that methylation is also one of the piece of the puzzle. And this methylation is a key biochemical and cellular process that affects genes and is a key element of detoxification.

So here, I mean like if...so basically, it's like the perfect storm. You know, we're methylating, you know, we're not methylating appropriately. So we're not detoxing, we have more chemicals, we are killing all the good stuff in our environment, we have terrible nutrition. And, you know, now...all of that now because, you know, and our environment is turning these genes on and off, now we have like, you know, we're turning genes on for chronic illness. So it's like this perfect storm of just more and more and more chronic diseases. And then what's scary, it's not even just affecting us but it's affecting our children.

Katie: Yeah, and I think that's what such the important part of your message is that as moms, like we truly...we can't just be reactive anymore. We have to be proactive about this because it's affecting our kids at such a fast rate. And unfortunately, like that means there's not... and I say this like gently, but like there's not so much room for moderation that there was for our grandparents. That doesn't mean you have to not have moderation in your life and not have balance, but it's definitely something that should be front of mind for all of us mom's, is to keep inflammation down in our kids. Because I feel like--and I think you talk about this a little bit in the book--but like it's things can affect them even more so at their age because they're more genetically susceptible when they're younger and they're still in development. So let's talk about your approach to inflammation. So say a family comes in, maybe mom has chronic health issues, kids are showing signs of chronic health issues. Where do you start?

Madiha: So, you know, inflammation is a very complex process, but there are a number of things that can trigger and make it worse. So deficits in any of these areas that I'm gonna discuss can actually cause or worsen inflammation. But what's key is that everybody, obviously everybody is different. Everybody has different biology, they have different factors, so looking at the entire picture is really key. So if I have a family come in and, you know, I go through their entire history, I talk to them about, you know, what's going on with their social environment, with their spiritual health, with their sleep, with their stress.

And then, you know, what are they eating, what's going on in their lives? What kind of toxins are they exposed to? So after taking a really in-depth history, then, you know, I go through and I discuss all these factors of inflammation, specifically talking to them in detail about where their deficiencies may be, right? And so...because that is like also a huge productive place to start when you're wanting to try to heal these chronic conditions... heal and/or prevent, right? Because with this same approach you can do to help heal and prevent your chronic symptoms. So I like to split it up into digestive health and detoxification, and the four S's: stress, sleep, social, and spiritual health.

So I always start off with the spiritual part first, and I sort of go all the way around. But because of the fact that

I start off with immediately when the child wakes up, or us, we have to focus on, you know, in gratitude. Because negative spiritual energy is related to an increase in stress, more depression, weaken immune system, increasing inflammation. And so healing the soul through either meditation or gratitude can really make a big difference. They have done studies where just gratitude really helps you get back into coherence, you know, makes it a nice, you know, your heart rate variability goes back into a nice sine wave. You know, like Heart Math has done lots of studies on that.

But more so that it helps your... you can turn genes on and off, and helps you then make decisions for the rest of the day. Because our subconscious governs about 90% of our thoughts and actions. And if, you know, if we're more negative, if the child is negative, you know, forget this. Why do I have to get up in the morning? Why do I got to do this? It makes life difficult for everybody. So just, immediately when I wake up in the morning or for my patients, I've been doing this for ten years. And immediately when they wake up in the morning, say ten things they're thankful for. Because that's when your subconscious and conscious are intermingling with each other and we want them to say ten things they're thankful for to help surround themselves with a zone of positivity to, you know, help get them off on the right foot, and change their subconscious to be more positive.

Because that then affects your decisions that you make throughout the day. You know, if you're gonna be...like you can be on all the gut healing diets in the world, but if you're like, you know, stressing out and frustrated with life and, you know, pessimistic, it can also lead to inflammation. So in my family, what I do with my kids is immediately when we wake up in the morning, we start singing the thankful song. And like literally, every single morning they know. My 10-year-old, I have a 10-year old, a 6-year old, a 4-year old, and a 2-year old. So we all are saying, we started singing like, thank you for our eyes, thank you for our ears, thank you for another beautiful day to change the world, you know. Because I get them involved in everything that I'm doing, too.

But it's so powerful because when you go back and forth, like one of them is like, "Thank you for my poop," and the other one was like, "Thank you for my belly button." And then, you know, I can't even imagine what they're gonna be thankful for later on but they're all boys. So, you know, I can't even imagine. But it's just exciting, it's a great, fun way to do it. And that's what I start all my patients off is the, you know, optimizing their spiritual health.

Then we look into their social environment because social environment is so important to heal and prevent chronic inflammation, because loneliness and negative social relationships actually increase cortisol levels, and depress the immune function, and then... again, all of that worsens inflammation.

So having like love and by giving them hugs and kisses, which sometimes especially when you deal with a kid with chronic illnesses, it's really hard, you know, too because they can start feeling lonely, they can start feeling, you know, by themselves. Or they even have to start negative. We always start focusing on their negative, so it's really key to obviously optimize that positivity and focus on everything that's going right in their lives instead of focusing on what's going wrong in their lives. And surrounding them with all these positive social relationships and support, and love can really, really heal.

Because those loved feelings releases hormones into the bloodstream that strengthens your immune system and improves your overall health and healing. So that is something, again, that we're taught but sometimes,

especially when you're in the crux of, you know, just trying to get the kids out to school and just, "Why you don't have your shoes on? What do I do now? What are you doing?" You know, because obviously my morning is probably as...yours is probably a little bit crazier than my morning, but it's crazy, right? And so sometimes it's harder to, you know, get on that right foot. So it's awesome to incorporate that positivity and that awesome love in the morning.

Then optimizing sleep, especially with, you know, social media and their phones next to the kid's head. And unlike, you know, at night when they're on their phones, or even children now are not going to sleep on a daily, you know, at a regular time because sleep while we sleep, our body doesn't consume much energy. So that leaves more energy for the body to remove toxins and make hormones and fight infections and lower inflammations. So getting enough rest is really, really, really important. Then the next piece is the last piece of the four S's was the stress. Because stress, we don't think our kids are stressed but especially with everything they see around us, they're like the biggest sponges, right?

If you're stressed, you know that your kids are like soaking it all up, right? So the stress contributes to 80% of the complaints that come to primary care physicians. And it significantly leads to inflammation because it also taxes the immune system and chronically increases the level of cortisol, which then leads to, you know, increases your body's blood sugar level and leads to more problems. Inflammation, diseases, you know, toxins also are a different type of, you know, second stresses on the body that we're gonna talk about next. But specifically, what's really, really important is to incorporate some sort of mind-body technique into your child's life.

Like, for example, my kids do meditation, we do mindful...I've taught them mindfulness and meditation, and we try to do that right before we go to bed every night, after their Epsom Salt baths, but we'll talk about that. But because all of that is really key and it's really important to keep these damaging hormones at bay. So that is the four S's, the stress, sleep, social, and spiritual health, that is really key. And then the next pieces are, you know, your digestive health. And we hear this all over the place, right? We know that our gut is the gateway to our health. And that is the biggest connection between our insides and our outsides. And our gut can not only contain 70% or 80% of our immune system but also contains 100 trillion bugs, right?

And we're only 10 to 32 trillion human cells. So it's crazy. We have like an entire world...and don't try to think about it too much, otherwise it's freaky. But we have this entire world inside of us that I teach...I talk to my kids about, you know, these are little friends in our bodies. So we need to keep them healthy and happy and vibrant. So...and so balancing the gut flora and keeping them healthy, keeping that healthy, along with... because if that is imbalanced, it can cause something called leaky gut. And that's when there's like a fire, it creates like a fire in your immune system. Because when you start killing off these good bugs with either poor nutrition or chronic stress or chronic infections or environmental toxins, all the things that we are exposed to a lot more these days, what happens is that it kills these good friends and get replaced by these bad friends.

And when we replace these...you know, when there's an imbalance there, obviously the bad friends don't do their job well that they're supposed to. And it goes...you know, and things get through that shouldn't be getting through because 70% to 80% of our immune system lies in the gut. It goes and attacks it and leaves inflammation all over the body. And so that's something that I talk to my kids about that, you know, everything in your environment, everything that you don't wanna kill the good friends in them. But somebody can be on a gut healing diet all they want, but if their sugar balance is all over the place then they're not gonna heal.

And that is another thing that is so critical nowadays because of the fact that we can... you know, proper nutrition and an anti-inflammatory diet not only keeps your digestive system happy but also regulates our glucose and stabilizes your insulin, which is a storage hormone secreted by the pancreas to help you regulate the levels of glucose in the bloodstream. Which is what you need for your glucose you need for your cells for energy. And it manages your insulin, so we need to manage something called insulin resistance.

And what's really scary is a lot of the kids that I'm seeing, because we don't check hemoglobin 1Cs and fasting insulin levels and things like that regularly in patients, most of the kids that I'm seeing are pre-diabetic. And that's another huge piece of the puzzle that can cause problems because insulin resistance, you know, refers to like your body's diminished ability to respond to the insulin and can result to rapid and premature aging and, you know, strokes and dementias, and heart attack. And those...like that's later on in life but right now, you know, it can cause like acne, you know, the darkening in the back of the neck, it's called Acanthosis nigricans, weakening around the midsection. It can cause all of these problems, fatigue, brain fog, acne, irregular periods.

So it can cause all of those problems, so that is another key piece. So whenever I talk to my patients about...and my family, about what to eat, we go through...I'm like, whenever you're hungry, make sure you go down the list, right? Because we wanna focus on those foods that are...heal your gut, balance your hormone, insulin, and glucose levels, along with are the most nutrient-dense foods that are gonna help heal your body, not hurt your body. And those foods are tons of vegetables, clean source of protein, and then healthy fats. And so when I go down the list with my kids, they really don't need any other foods. So I feel like if I give them other stuff, they don't eat their vegetables. So that is really, really important.

I need to fill my kids and family's bellies up with as many vegetables as possible because that does really heal. There are some nutritional deficiencies that can cause...a lot of us are like vitamin D deficient, not getting enough fish oil, things like that. But another key piece and the last piece is the toxins, because we live in a world that is full of toxins. And all of that regular exposure can accumulate in our bodies, placing a really, really heavy burden on the liver. And the liver can't start, can't like detox appropriately. And so when it can't detox appropriately, then that leads to...it lowers your immunity, increases your vulnerability to autoimmune issues, cancers, blood sugar issues, can make your body numb to insulin. So worst is insulin resistance and leptin resistance.

And, you know, and causes difficulty in losing weight. So now our kids are, you know, overweight and leading to heart disease, diabetes, strokes, it can affect their epigenetics. It can even turn genes on and off, and inflames the gut, leads to a leaky gut. So these are, I know that was a lot that I just went through. But it was, you know, the digestive health, the detoxification, your optimizing your digestive health with the tons of vegetables, protein, and healthy fats, bone broth and probiotics and all of that, along with keeping the foods out that are gonna hurt the gut. Then optimizing, you know, your glucose made by focusing...still focusing on, you know, your vegetables, protein, and healthy fats. Intermittent fasting can also help depending on the age of the child to optimize insulin resistance.

And then we have is a decreased toxins in your environment, you know, foods, what you're doing. And then incorporating a stress management technique. We, you know, focusing on their sleep, getting them to bed on time. And then we have is, you know, social health and then your spiritual health. So all of those pieces of the puzzle are really, really powerful in optimizing your child's health and your family's health, not only healing

disease but also preventing not one symptom but all the symptoms.

Katie: I love it. And what you said about sugar, I wanna go a little bit deeper here because I take a lot of heat for saying that children truly have no biological need for refined sweeteners ever at all. And people are like, "No, it's all about balance. Like kids these days, you just have to let them like once in a while and all that." And I get that like there's a lot of social pressure but I'm like, "But biologically, like you actually don't. Like they are not having a sugar deficiency, I promise there's carbs in vegetables." But I'd love to hear a little bit more about how you manage the sugar monster because those moms are right, the sugar is everywhere in today's society. So on a practical level, how do you keep that balance with the family and keep the sugar out?

Madiha: So, you're right. Sugar is in everything, right? And we are literally surrounded with sugar. And what boggles my mind and kills me is that even when you go and take them...like every trip to the doctor ends up, "Oh, here's a Dum-Dum." Or, you know, every holiday is surrounded with sugar, sugar, sugar, you know, every single... so every chance we get to shove sugar down in our children is we do as a society. Which is that's another reason why we're, you know, we're all getting sick because of all these altered nutrition. Seventy five, 74% of the packaged foods have sugar and it's harder because sugar obviously stimulates like, you know, the brain reward centers, right? Being neurotransmitters and so when you stop eating sugar and suddenly you start experiencing like, experiencing withdrawals.

So initially, it's difficult for the child. But the thing is what's really scary is that, you know, once you give these kids sugar, it's directly, because sugar is actually directly related to all of these chronic illnesses, and has no nutritional value whatsoever, no matter what somebody is trying to tell you. Because what happens is that these bad bacteria thrive on sugar, leading to bad bacteria, overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria and yeast, like fungi, which then increases more cravings. And it's like this vicious cycle. So the more you give your kids, the more they become a monster and the more they crave the sugar. And it's like you're constantly dealing with this, you know, cycle of craziness.

And because this...then what happens is that this is an imbalance, sugar imbalance is the microbiome leading to further inflammation, which then interferes with your white blood cells and it destroys...that are supposed to destroy toxins and fight infections that make you sicker. And then all of these, and that...what's even scarier is all of those reactions occur like immediately after eating sugar, like within minutes of eating sugar. It disrupts the blood sugar balance, it spikes up insulin levels, causes brain fog and fatigue. It cause all of these crazy, crazy, crazy things. So what I do is I try to keep sugar out of it. And the way that I start of with doing that is by one, don't bring it into the house.

You know, because if it's not there...and that's like the best thing is because the fact that if it's not in my house, then I have, there's no fighting. There's no arguing. But another way that I do that is if you fill your children's belly with the most nutrient-dense foods, like tons of protein and tons of great vegetables..so tons of vegetables, clean protein, and healthy fats, they don't need the sugar as much. What I do in my family is I bake with almond flour. So there's like a little bit of honey in there but a little bit goes a long way. So they still feel like they're getting a little bit of a treat after they have their vegetable, protein, and healthy fat.

Like, for example, this morning I quickly baked up blueberry muffins. And it's just, it's like the easiest. I can make 96 little blueberry muffins for like \$5, so it's really cost effective and it's really fast. But they only need one little one. And like 96 muffin is only like half a cup of honey. And they only need like one to be satiated. So that's what I do instead if they do need it. I fill them, I make sure that they go down the list, their vegetables,

protein, and healthy fats. Optimize their immune system, making sure they don't have all these...because the fat also, you know, you're having less tantrums with optimizing your gut microbiome. And then giving them something like as an alternative to take to school or when they, you know, as a special treat when they're in the mood. And, you know, giving them...well, again, the most nutrient-dense foods.

Another way is, you know, the calming teas can also help. Like giving your kids calming teas, sleeping, engaging in other activities, helping to release stress, increasing happiness. Sometimes vitamin C if they're really sugar addicted. But all of those things can really help to, you know, keep sugar out of our lives. Because, again, sugar, you know, leads to, impairs your immune system, increases oxidative stress, leads to weight gain, accumulation of belly fat, insulin resistance, fatty liver, increases your appetite. Also this is another cool thing. So I realized that once I didn't have sugar in my kid's lives, they're not as hungry as much.

Oh, my gosh, I'm not in the kitchen all day long. Because their bodies are finally getting those nutrients.

Katie: Absolutely. And I think it's true. Like until you do it, it's hard to believe. But kids really do adapt and like my kids now, we don't have sugar in the house either. We do have the occasional treat that's like either with the tiny bit of natural sweetener or just fruit which they love. But they've developed a taste for vegetables and they actually love them. Like my kids will devour, they call Romaine lettuce crunchy lettuce because that's their fun lettuce. Cause it's not like the weed lettuce, they call the mulin mix....and then they devour that. And so I think you have to like give kids a little more credit, but I think that was the key point. You can still give them treats but there's no need to ever give them the really bad junk.

Madiha: No, you don't. Because of the fact, my kids, they think that a strawberry is like the sweetest thing ever. They're like, "Oh, my gosh, mom, this is like the best. I don't know why people need candy because of the fact they're like juicy. It's like sweet, it's like everything all in a little colorful little bite." And they love sweet peas, like sugar snap peas. They're like...oh, it's so funny. They've called it candy all this time. Like for the last four years, they go, "Oh, mom, can we have that candy vegetable?" And I'm always like, "Yeah, sure, you can have the candy," So they are like, they love it. So you develop and you adjust your sweets, your taste buds and your microbiome. Actually they say this, as sicker your microbiome is, the more it craves these foods that is going to, you know, just help the bad bacteria or bad bugs grow.

And so once your child is healthier and you get them adapting and get them off the sugar, those foods that are the natural sweeteners is so much. And my kids, if they go out, they'll have like a spoon of something and they're like, "Ugh, that's so much sugar. That's too much." Because for them, that strawberry or that sugar snap pea or that carrot is like as much as they really need.

Katie: And really, that's where we should all be. And I totally get it. It was a long process for me of healing my gut and healing autoimmune disease. And now it's like the things I had to force myself to eat, like sardines or like sauerkraut, I crave them. Because like your body knows, and once you train it.

This podcast is brought to you by Vivos. This is something we recently invested in for our entire family and we are absolutely loving it and here is why. So, data shows that the nutrition we receive in utero determines our palate development and how narrow or open our airway and jaw structure are. So a narrow mouth, jaw and airway increase the chances of needing braces, of getting sleep apnea, breathing difficulties and much more. But it was pretty much assumed that your jaw structure was set in stone once you were born or for sure after

the first couple of years of life. But Vivos has found that not only is this not true, but they created a non-invasive, non-surgical, easy way of widening the maxilla, the jaw and the airway. So for our kids, this means that they get to avoid the braces that my husband and I both had and for my husband, this means his sleep apnea has disappeared and he stopped snoring, which is a bonus for me. I'll be writing more about this soon but you can check them out, in the meantime, at wellnessmama.com/go/vivos

This podcast is brought to you by Dry Farm Wines. This is the only wine I drink anymore. After researching and finding that many other wines contain added sugar, dyes like ultra vita-mega purple and filtering agents including fish waters, egg whites and some other unsavory ingredients. And things like sawdust to improve the taste. But the Dry Farm part is important too. What this means is that the grapes are not irrigated. Without the water, they don't get as big or as sweet, yielding higher nutrient and lower alcohol wines naturally. Their wines are lab tested for purity and to make sure that they are free of even trace amounts of pesticides and herbicides. And they are all sourced from small family dry farm vineyards all over the world. I absolutely love their wines and I find them to be less expensive than other high-quality wines. And Wellness Mama listeners can get an extra bottle of wine for a penny at wellnessmama.com/go/wine.

Katie: But I think another important point that I wanted to highlight about what you said, especially about the sugar, it's actually a parenting rule. Not related specifically to health but I have two non-negotiable parenting rules in my house with my kids that keep me sane. One is which I will never do anything for them they're capable of doing themselves because we're really big on fostering independence.

And the second is I will never do anything to stack the odds not in their favor. And it's like, I feel like if you give your kids sugar and dyes and all these horrible foods and then expect them to behave, you're asking a lot. Because you're giving them mind-altering chemicals. And so to me, that's part of like not stacking the odds against them and stacking the odds in their favor so they can actually like be grateful and behave well and be part of the family and contribute. And so that's one of our like parenting rules that we kind of follow at our house.

Madiha: I love it. And education. I think...just like what you're doing is like educating. I think starting off really young, like my kids know that these things that I've called them all chemicals. So they're like mama...like for example, the Halloween came, my four-year-old came home and was like, "Mama, they gave me those chemicals. And I was like no, I'm not gonna kill the friends in my belly." And then he came home and he was like all proud of himself and he did not touch a single one. So we give our children I think a lot less credit than they actually deserve because they are able to process things and understand things to so much more than we even think they can. And educate them exactly what's going on with the microbiome. What happens to this? What happens with your poop? You know, how your body reacts on these foods?

Teaching them, you know, why we're not doing something instead of just telling them we can't, teaching them why. Like literally, I pull out my pictures. Like I did a children's book recently and I sat there and I did it with my kids. I'm like, "Look what happens to the microbiome when we have too much sugar. Look what happens when we have too much sugar to the insulin level. Look what's going with this, you know, look how much it's raising your blood sugar level. Do you wanna do that? This is why you go crazy. This is why you can't control your emotions. This is why you can't, you know, you're always craving this because it kills those things up."

And then I tell them, I'm like, you know, "This is where, you know, those commercials." You know, obviously

that's what we do right now is we put them on commercials, sugar, sugar, sugar sells, right? And we're doing it to the kids, so they know all these things. So education is really, really key I think also.

Katie: Absolutely, agree. And I wanna go a little deeper on sleep, too, because I think that's a huge pain point for a lot of moms. And obviously when kids are sleeping, it makes the world so much better because then you're sleeping. And so I'd love to hear any, just mom tricks you have for nurturing a good sleep routine for kids.

Madiha: So I think...you know, one key piece is that you need to live your entire daily routine so it can optimize sleep. So, for example, waking up in the morning. So keeping inflammation at bay can also optimize their sleep. So like we wake up in the morning and we sing the thankful song. We live the life with gratitude and spiritual health and, you know, social...surrounding ourselves with love and positivity, along with eating tons of vegetables, protein, and healthy fats. Along with, going outside, running around, getting enough sunshine, you know, running around with their, you know, barefooted to get enough micro, you know, to expose, increase the diversity of their microbiome. Coming home then doing some meditation.

But what my biggest thing is that I have a set routine. And that set routine has worked well for the last seven years, so that's why I keep on doing it. It's awesome. And what it is it's after they do their homework, then we do dinner, they help clean up. So they are responsible. Just, I love what, you know, I'm not gonna do anything for what you can do yourself. So they do the chores. They take out, you know, I've taught them ever since like two, you know, start putting your stuff away. They clean the house, so that's their chores. They put away the dishes so then I don't have to do any of that, and I can also relax after they go to bed. Then we go, we march upstairs about like, you know, 7:30, we march upstairs.

For half an hour, we get into the tub and that we do an Epsom salt bath. And I feel like that really helps to relax them. You know, putting down the lights a little bit, changing the lights to more amber. But most specifically, the Epsom salt baths which helps them detox, gets them in the mood. And then I start, you know, get them ready, get them into their bed. We do some meditation, that's when I specifically do their meditation with them. Meditation, mindful meditation, and then gratitude again, put them into bed, tuck them in, and then, you know, positivity again. And then just wake them up with positivity.

So then, again, living that day and developing that bedtime routine, setting like a restful sanctuary, living the morning right for a successful sleep, all of that are really key pieces in trying to optimize sleep in your children. Because sleep deprivation causes a lot of problems. And we wanna make sure that that doesn't happen and maybe to keep on going and optimizing their immune system. So sleep is really a key thing. And those bedtime routines and living a day right is the best way to do it.

Katie: 100% agree. And I'd like to talk a little bit about, actually about you and your life now because I have met you in person. And you are like the most energetic, happy, joyful person I've ever met. And I just have to ask because I get this question a lot from people. Like truly, how do you balance it all? And as mom, like how do you make it all work without getting burned out? Because I know you like, you have a full-time job. You're a doctor as well plus you have kids, plus you're writing books, plus you're managing a household. So share your wisdom. How do you do it?

Madiha: I am. I am doing a lot. But for me, the way that I am staying...so it's all about balance, right? Balance is key to help, you know, keeping it all in balance and keeping the inflammation at bay also. I wake up... I guess I

practice what I preach. So I have gratitude flowing through my veins, you know? I really feel it keeps you like totally coherent and able to accomplish so many more things. You know, obviously there's meditation that really keeps you balanced. Because as moms, I think we put a lot on ourselves and we stop, you know, taking care of ourselves because we're taking care of so many other people. In my house, I have me, obviously my husband is like my fifth child.

And then I'm also taking care of elderly in-laws who don't believe in the things that I'm doing. Who don't, are not on the same page. So it's hard because of the fact that literally I'm cooking two different meals. I'm writing, I'm blogging, I'm public speaking, you know, I have a full-time practice, it's crazy. But making sure that I have these key pieces of the foundations of good health, which is the gratitude, proper sleeping, make sure...again, like this is why I love talking to you. You know, having those good social interactions that help lift people up. And, you know, making sure you incorporate those stress management techniques. And it's really simple. For me, I only take like 15, 20 minutes out of a day and totally meditate a lot, and I do it multiple times a day.

Along with, you know, I mean...I intermittent fast also regularly, along with only eating vegetables, protein, and healthy fats. That keeps me energetic and keeps me, you know, in tune with my body, about what my body needs, and taking my supplements. So I guess just taking care of me in conjunction with taking care of everybody else, and trying to do it all. But what's really important also is I feel like I get most of my work done by making sure that kids have responsibilities. Because I can't do it all. So my 10-year old now is old enough to take care most of the house, make sure the house is clean. Like they help me with the housework. So then I can then take over, you know, do all the things that I'm really.

I'm like, "You know what, mama is to change the world here. I can't be keep picking up your stuff." But that's really I think important. So living, so optimizing my health by keeping those key pieces in tune in my life, so giving myself some time is really important and keeps then, I'm a happier parent than if I'm able to give myself just like 20 minutes and able to eat properly and do all those things. Everything else goes into them.

Katie: I agree. And that's something I noticed about our generation is that like typically, like we tend to think parenting is like super, super hard and stressful. But when I talk to like my grandparent's generation, they don't. And when I start asking questions, like one of the keys is everybody in my grandparent's generation, by a really young age, they had regular chores. But they were just expected to do it. They were not like paid for them, they were not praised for them, they were not like coddled into doing them. And they had to contribute to the family. And they were much more responsible.

I think in today's world, I don't know why the shift but we tend to just like want our kids to have this like responsibility-free, sugar-filled childhood. But it makes it harder on them and on us. And so I think that's a huge key, what you just said. Like we shouldn't feel guilty for letting our kids being contributing members of our households.

Madiha: Absolutely. And that makes...gives you more time to be your best self. Like, you know, my house is clean in the morning before they go to bed, before they go to school. And at night before they go to bed, it's clean. The dishes are done, everything is done. They come home, they help me with laundry. You know, that gives me so much more time to do the things that I really wanna do. And then I get like two hours at night from like 9:00 to 10:30 or two and one and a half hours, depending on when I get them into bed to actually blog or write, and you know, respond to emails and things like that. So, I mean it...having a schedule really

helps by getting your kids on board, keeping them as healthy as possible so you don't have to deal with all that.

Because I'm like, you got to keep your gut microbiome as healthy as possible because mama isn't gonna, you know, I don't wanna concentrate all my energy on that. So that's a priority, keeping us as healthy as possible. It really helps also to get everything done that you really wanna do.

Katie: Absolutely. And I'll share some links to post in the show notes, but I'm 100% the same way. I don't do my kids laundry anymore, they do their own. And even the little ones because I'm like I only have one-eighth of the clothes in this family, like I should not be doing 100% of the laundry. And also, like I think we forget sometimes when we say we're raising children, we're actually trying to raise adults. And when they go away, they're gonna have to do all these things. So we're not actually like helping them by not teaching them these things.

Another huge question I get from moms, and I totally relate is, it can be like overwhelming, like stress-wise but also like financially. I can seem overwhelming we're trying to switch to a healthier lifestyle because unfortunately, some cheap foods are...like bad foods are cheaper. So I'd love to hear any tips you have for shopping and for budgeting and for getting the good foods in without breaking the bank.

Madiha: Yes, and that is like my goal in life. Like I'm trying to do that because I'm a bargain shopper. And so whatever is gonna give me the biggest bang for my buck is gonna, you know, is the way I'm gonna do it. And that's what I realize with my patients, that it's more sustainable if I can give them tips that I practice because I live this lifestyle. I walk the walk, I wanna..the talk that I talk, I walk the walk. And so does my children and my family. Still can't help my in-laws, but otherwise, the rest of us are doing it.

But what's really, really, really, really key and to know to that this way, this healthy lifestyle is actually super cost effective and super healthy. So let me give you my tips.

My tips are that I, one, batch cook, right? I buy from... so batch cook, but specifically I get from like, you know, wholesalers. I use a lot of almond flour, some honey, coconut oil, my nuts and my seeds. You can buy at like wholesales markets that can easily be used. I know like, for example, at wholesalers, like you can get like almond flour, a three-pound bag of almond flour for \$11. And therefore, I can make 96 mini muffins for \$5. So you can feed a lot of people even for treats, you feed a lot of people for a little bit.

But even like wholesalers and getting your, you know, tons of vegetables, protein when they're on sale, from even the grocery stores, you don't need to shop at the specialty stores. You can go to Walmart has...Aldi has great like deals on grass-fed beef and organic produce. And especially when it goes on sale, like Meijer has great, great, great, great, great deals there. Along with...but I, what I really wanna emphasize to your listeners is that once your child gets that optimal nutrition that he and she needs, they are not constantly eating.

So for example, like if you give your child your protein, your vegetable, and healthy fats, that keeps you satiated. So therefore...and they're not again after an hour. They can go a couple of hours without eating. And a little goes a long way. While, for example, if the people can eat, I know when I was growing up I grew up with the same bad habits that have caused most of us down to chronic disease. Because I grew up with eating tons of cereals, strudels, you know, took cans of Coke to school every day. So I've been there and done that.

And I realized that we can go through...like at that time, I could have gone through like probably an entire, you know, box of cereal all by myself.

But you can't go through a bag like, you know, an entire bag of almonds, or you can't go through an entire...so it actually is cheaper that way because you eat a little bit but you eat the most nutrient dense. And these foods...and this is another analogy that I like to give to parents is that when you go to a restaurant, what is the first thing that you get? Bread, right? And I'm thinking why do they give you bread? It's because of the fact that these bread actually inhibits leptin which is...all these processed food inhibits leptin, which leptin is important for satiation.

So your kids are never satiated if the more processed foods we give them that is expensive, the more hungry they actually are. One, because they're not satiated. And two, because they're not getting the most nutrient-dense foods. So we're actually your, and then what happens is that because you eat the bread at the restaurants, you actually order more. Because you have now cut off that satiation response. So, when you shift to a more whole food based natural, like full of nutrient dense foods that stabilize your blood sugar level, that optimize your gut microbiome, you actually end up cooking less and spending less on their food, on their doctor visits, on everything. On your sanity, right? So, it actually ends up becoming a very easy cost effective lifestyle that way then.

Katie: I agree. And I say like frozen vegetables are cheap. Like if you're truly are in a really tight budget, like focus on, buy the ones on the dirty dozen list organic. But the others, don't freak out if you can't buy everything organic. And buy frozen vegetables, they're inexpensive and you can add them to anything. Cabbage is always inexpensive and you can add it to literally anything. Like there are ways to find those fixes and work them in.

Madiha: There is, and there's so many great...you know, it's easy because you're right. With cabbage, a little bit goes, you get the entire thing for really cheap and it fills us all up. Same with like cauliflower. And so all of these things, you know, those nutrient-dense foods, if we just focus on the ones, you know, just like what you said, like if you can't afford it just do the dirty dozen. But the rest of it, it can fill you up. Veggies fill you up, healthy fats go a long way, all of that are really key to keeping somebody satiated and then keeping the budget as low as possible.

Katie: I absolutely agree, I love it. And I wanna respect your time but obviously, I would recommend really highly your book, "The Holistic RX". But where else can people find you online? We'll have all those links in the show notes but tell people where they can find you.

Madiha: You can find me, I am on social media, Holistic Mom MD. My Facebook page is [holisticmommd.com](https://www.facebook.com/holisticmommd.com). I also blog for Documenting HOPE, which is a national organization dedicated to heal chronic disease in children. It's an amazing non-for profit organization. But the book, "The Holistic RX" can be found on Amazon. And what they will find...and in local, all the libraries, you know, the libraries should have it and the bookstores along with, you know, obviously you can get it from the publisher because it's out of stock on Amazon, currently, they'll refill it. But what "The Holistic RX" offers is the best of functional integrative and holistic medicine all in one source, covering over 79, like literally 80 conditions for all ages.

So I've split that book up into like the first section is the foundations of good health that we just talked about. Chronic inflammation and disease, digestive health and detoxification, and the four S: stress, sleep, social, and

spiritual health. And then the second part dives into adjusting the holistic RX for your condition. And then it goes through like 80 conditions, including like autism and ear infection for children. But 80 condition for adults and children that give the parent like so many more tools in their tool belt that they can use to optimize their child's wellness. Including like, for example, like you know for constipation, like what are the supplements, the homeopathics, the acupressure points, and aromatherapy that you can use for adults and children to optimize their health and wellness?

Because there's so many more things that we can do to help your child holistically and integrative-wise, that can do a little bit, do less harm and more good and heal from the inside out. So that's what the book contains. I try to make it like a one-stop shop, spent five years writing, four years writing it. So it wasn't an overnight project. It's very, very, very, very...it's my passion project that I really wanted to get out there to help as many families as possible.

Katie: I love it, end to end. Would you just give...I know a lot of moms, depending on where you're starting from, this can seem overwhelming and it can seem undoable. So like I said, you're a super positive and happy person, so what would be some of your encouragement to those moms, just like a couple baby steps to get started?

Madiha: So the baby steps to get started are one, to know that... one, I think the mindset also makes a big difference, is that to know that one, doctors don't have all the answers. We were not taught any of it. There is another way. You do have...you can, you are in charge of your child's health to empower them. Because look at all of what you have accomplished over the last, you know, so many years, despite being like less than 100%. I can't even imagine what you'd be able to accomplish with you and your family when you are 100%.

So focusing on yourselves is really key. Optimizing, lowering the inflammation by keeping your...like 10 things in the morning when your thankful for, right? Optimizing your sleep, keeping your stress managed, optimizing your social health, eating well, and then detoxifying. All of that can really help not just you...because you are a beacon of inspiration to all those around you. And I can't even imagine what you're gonna be able to accomplish when you're more than 100%. So it's gonna not only trickle up...heal you but it's gonna help heal your children and the entire world. Like literally, moms can change the world. And you guys can do it because we are literally capable of more than we know that we are.

Katie: I 100% agree. And I have said that too from the beginning that I think not only are moms capable of changing the world, I think we're the only ones who truly actually can. Because we're raising the next generation.

Madiha: Absolutely, absolutely. We can totally change the world.

Katie: And if enough of us do it, that's the thing. It seems like an uphill battle, but if we all start doing it, it becomes normal. And I think we're getting closer. Like it's so much easier now than it was even 5 years ago or 10 years ago. So I think those changes are happening. And I love this community and everybody here who's making those little changes in their own communities. And I love the work you're doing.

Madiha: Thank you so much. I love the work you're doing. I just find that amazing.

Katie: This is awesome. I could literally talk to you all day long. But I wanna respect your time, so thank you, Madiha, so much for being here. This was a joy and I know it helped a lot of people listening so much. Thank you for spending your time with us.

Madiha: My pleasure. So honored.

Katie: Again, thanks to all of you for listening, and I will see you next time on the Healthy Mom Podcast.

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.