



Wellness Mama Podcast Episode 32

7 Tips for a Healthy Summer

Show Notes: <http://wellnessmama.com/podcast/healthy-summer/>

I am beyond glad that summer is almost here... so glad, in fact, that I talk to myself about it in this short podcast episode. Listen as I answer questions and share by best tips for preparing for a healthy (and stress-free) summer.

Did you Know?

The term “dog days of summer” refers to the time between July 3 and August 11 and refers to the star Sirius in the constellation Canis Major. Also, according to folklore, if you want to know (roughly) the temperature, listen to the number of cricket chirps in a 15-second period and add 37 to get the approximate temperature in Fahrenheit.

7 Tips for Healthy Summer

1. Eat Your Sunscreen (+ Astaxanthin Benefits)

What goes into your body is at least as important as what goes ON it for sun protection. An anti-inflammatory diet low in processed foods and high in vegetables, Omega-3s and healthy fats can help prevent sun damage and increase your body's ability to get benefits from the sun.

Resources Mentioned:

- Article: [Eat Your Sunscreen](#)– diet and supplements for healthy summer skin
- Article: [Astaxanthin Benefits](#)
- Article: [Avoid Sunburn and Tan Better with Real Food](#)
- Supplement: [Astaxanthin](#)

2. Get Dirty!

There is a lot of evidence that our overly sterile, sanitized and dirt free lifestyle is hurting our children's immune systems and microbiomes. Microbes in the soil help a child's immune system develop and also provide beneficial soil based organisms, which are potent probiotics.

This summer, let the kids play outside, make mud-pies, [start a garden](#), get dirty... and join them!

Article: [Why Kids \(and Adults\) Need Dirt](#)

3. Make Your Own Bug Spray

Most commercial bug sprays contain DEET, which can be harmful to humans and especially to aquatic life and birds. Avoid the potential problems with DEET by [making your own bug spray with one of these two simple recipes](#). You can also [make bug-repellent lotion bars](#) and an age-old concoction called “[The Vinegar of the Four Thieves](#)” that smells terrible but keeps all the bugs away!

4. And Sunscreen

Sunscreen is another commercial product that is often packed with harmful (and unnecessary) chemicals. Make your own with simple ingredients like coconut oil, shea butter, beeswax, zinc oxide and raspberry oil and get the same effect without the downsides.

Recipe: [Homemade sunscreen](#) or [sunscreen bars](#)

5. Beach Waves Spray for Easy Summer Hair

Since unfortunately I can't be at the beach every day during the summer, I can at least trick my hair into thinking I am. My [homemade Beach Waves Texturizing Spray](#) uses the same minerals, salts and magnesium found in ocean water that give hair such wonderful volume and waves so that you can

achieve the look at home everyday. Just spritz onto damp hair, scrunch and let air-dry.

6. Meal Plan

You know what isn't fun?

Being stuck in the kitchen cooking while your family is playing outside. This is even less fun at the beach. Whether you are traveling or staying home for some much needed relaxation, spend a few minutes each week to pre-plan meals for the summer so that you can save time (and money) and spend it outdoors... in the dirt (see #2). [Here are my favorite meal planning tips.](#)

7. Easy Food while Traveling

It is especially important to plan ahead when traveling. There's nothing quite like being stuck hours from a big city with no access to anything healthy and five hungry (and screaming) kids... ask me how I know...

Since that time, which we not-so-lovingly refer to as the Hangry Incident of 2013, we are careful to pack plenty of fruits, vegetables, pre-cooked meats, [chia seed squeezes](#), [energy bars](#), and [coconut flour muffins](#) for long car rides. We also pre-pack most of our meats for the whole trip and I pre-make as much as possible so I don't spend the whole time cooking.

Transcript:

Hi, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from WellnessMama.com. Did you know that you hear the term "The dog days of summer" very often? But the real "dog days" actually refers to the weeks between July 3 and August 11 and these are named after the star called Sirius in the constellation of Canus Major. So, that's where that phrase comes from.

Another fun experiment that someone mentioned to me recently having to do with summer, is if you want to find out what the temperature is and you don't have a thermometer or a smartphone on you, the frequency of the crickets' chirps is supposed to fluctuate with the temperature. So they say you can count a cricket's chirps for 15 seconds and then add 37 and you'll have the approximate outdoor temperature in Fahrenheit. So, just a random cool fact.

As you may have guessed, today's podcast is going to be about getting ready for a healthy summer. I've gotten so many questions via e-mail and on the blog, lately, about various aspects of preparing for summer. Whether it be meal-planning for when kids are out of school or natural sunscreen or natural bug spray . . . different hair care products for summer are just across the board.

So rather than bringing on a guest today, it's just going to be me talking about summer and about getting ready for a healthy summer with your family. I definitely, for one, am extremely ready for summer to be here. I wish I was at

the beach the entire time, but I'm just glad for the warmer weather after the winter we had.

So to jump right in, I get a question a lot. I have a post called "Do you eat your sunscreen?" This post gets quite a few questions and I figured it would be a great time to talk about in-depth. The basic concept is that what we put into our bodies has just as much of an effect on our skin as what we put on the outside like sunscreen and I noticed this myself drastically when I first switched to real food because I have very fair skin; I'm Irish-Scottish, so about as fair-skinned as you can get with blonde hair. I used to burn horribly all the time and as a teenager, always wished I could tan and I never could and I would always be burned after even just 20 or 30 minutes in the sun.

When I switched to real food, I noticed one day that I hadn't been burned in a long time, even if I was outside gardening in the heat of the day and that my skin was also just naturally more glowing and darker, but not tan in the unhealthy way that it had been in the past. I started really delving into the research and there actually is research that supports the idea that when you have the right concentration of nutrients in your diet and you've eliminated foods that cause inflammation, the body has a much better ability to . . . a much higher sun tolerance and a lowered chance of burning. So for me, this meant that I am able to now spend time in the sun in a healthy way. There were certain factors that I really noticed optimized this.

So this time of year, I start my internal sunscreen protocol that I call it and just making sure all of those factors are in place. Because conventional wisdom says you're supposed to slather on sunscreen and that's all you need in the summer. Every day, if you're outside at all, put sunscreen especially on your face.

One thing I found in researching is that wearing most sunscreens blocks the body's ability to produce Vitamin D. Vitamin D is actually a pre-hormone, it's not a vitamin at all and it's necessary for a variety of different reactions including cancer prevention. So while obviously, skin cancer is a big issue, it's something that needs to be talked about. If you have low Vitamin D levels, it can also put you at risk for other cancers that have much higher . . . that are much more widespread like breast cancer. I think that's an important thing for us to talk about.

But, most sunscreens also contain toxic chemicals that can be more dangerous than moderate sun exposure. For instance, even though there's been this big push to have wider use of sunscreen . . . and statistically, we're actually using more sunscreen. Incidents of skin cancer, especially melanoma, is rising dramatically. In fact right now, skin cancer rates are going up by about 4.2% annually, despite the fact that we spend less time outdoors. Drastically less time outdoors and wear more sunscreen.

So, if skin cancer rates are rising despite sunscreen use and reduced sun exposure, it makes you step back and think "Maybe there's another underlying cause." I've written about this before, the link between nutrition and sunburn. But as I said, I'm just becoming more and more convinced of this as the evidence unfolds. I know there are many of you listening who, maybe like my husband, are blessed with naturally olive skin and this isn't a big deal, so bear with me, I'll promise I'll get to other topics.

But, I think we have to look at the underlying cause because doctors and sunscreen manufacturers are so quick to push sunscreen for those who burn easily; that was always a solution for me. But I look at this kind of like giving an antibiotic for every illness or getting stitches every time you have a paper cut. It addresses the short-term problem, but it's not addressing the underlying cause.

So if you think about it just on a skin level, sunburn is a type of inflammation. It's caused by the sun, but it's a type of inflammation. Diet has a tremendous impact on inflammation throughout the body. So, addressing diet is often just as important as slathering on the sunscreen and I would say, whether you use sunscreen or not, you absolutely need to address your diet and reduce inflammation because that's going to help reduce your risk of many health problems including, perhaps, skin cancer. But it also is wise to look at the way that this can play out in your skin. So absolutely, I agree with every dermatologist who says that you never want to burn, you want to protect the

skin. A lot of them recommend using a hat or protective clothing if you're going to be out in the sun for a long period of time. I still do that. If I'm going to be out beyond what I know my sun tolerance is, I'll just put on a swimsuit cover and a hat, rather than putting on the sunscreen if I don't need it.

But the part that I found the most fascinating is the anti-inflammatory diet and how that had a dramatic impact on my skin in the summer. Of course, this type of diet is beneficial in so many ways. Obviously, eating real food pays dividends across the board. But in a short list, what I avoid in this time of year and all the time, but especially now, are any kind of processed foods, especially vegetable oils. I found that this was a big, confounding factor for me. Because if we were at the beach on vacation and I ate something at a restaurant that would not have been processed; it was like either just fish or vegetables but it was cooked in vegetable oil, I would be more likely to burn the next day. My theory is that vegetable oils can increase inflammation in the body; they're high in Omega 6's and Omega 3's tend to help reduce the risk of burning. So, I'm very careful to avoid hydrogenated vegetable oils and vegetable oils this time of year and stick to fats like coconut oil and olive oil. Also avoiding grains and sugars because those both can create inflammation in the body and I know, obviously, grains are a controversial topic and that's going to be a matter of personal health and what works best for you. But for me, I definitely do better this time of year when I avoid grains.

On the flip side of that, I try to eat lots of healthy Omega 3 rich foods and healthy saturated fats. Tons of leafy greens, which are protected in so many ways. Then an unusual one, if you can tolerate it, is to eat tomato paste because there's lycopene in the tomato paste, that it seems to be protective of the skin.

Then, I also have a supplement protocol. My supplements tend to change based on the time of the year. This time of year, I reduce my Vitamin D-3 internal intake because I'm getting more of it from the sun. I personally take about 5,000 IUs a day, but that's after blood testing and consulting with a doctor. This is definitely not something you want to get too much of, so that's really important.

I also take about 2,000 to 5,000 milligrams of Vitamin C a day, personally, which is an immune booster and an anti-inflammatory. Then the one that I don't take as much in the winter that I've just added back in is called astaxanthin. This is a really potent antioxidant. It's more potent than dark chocolate, blueberries, krill oil, anything. Research shows that this acts as kind of an internal sunscreen. It's basically great for skin health and sun protection. It's an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory. Some athletes take it because it's also an endurance booster.

Basically, astaxanthin is a carotenoid and one of the many . . . the most potent antioxidants around. It's been studied. There's dozens of studies about this

online. It's just, for me, I found that it's extremely beneficial in the summer. It's bright red; if you've ever taken it or broken open a capsule, it will stain your skin. It's bright red. This is the pigment that salmon or krill . . . I should back up and explain that better.

It's one of the most powerful and most studied carotenoids and it's produced when a certain species of algae dries up. Basically when it dries up, it produces astaxanthin to protect itself from losing its nutrient supply and to stay alive. So you can get natural sources of astaxanthin from this algae and from animals that consume it, including krill and salmon. That's actually where the red pigment in salmon comes from. That's why if you notice at the store, wild caught salmon that's consuming more of this will have brighter red skin and that's one of the reasons.

So as an antioxidant, it's able to reduce inflammation and it has some unique properties that make it really beneficial. It's said to be 6,000 times more powerful than Vitamin C, which of course, gives it amazing antioxidant ability. It's able to cross the blood-brain barrier and the blood-retinal barrier, so that there's evidence it can support both the brain and the eyes and many other antioxidants aren't able to do that.

Of course, the reason I take it is, it's sun protection. It basically works as an internal sunscreen, since it reduces that inflammation that might come from food or stress and it also is said to be able to help reduce UVA damage to skin

cells. Like I mentioned already, sunburn is a type of inflammation. So, if you've already got inflammation in the body, the body is less able to protect itself from the sun. I just take astaxanthin daily this time of year and have noticed that it's really helpful.

To segue a little bit, summer usually, hopefully, means spending more time outdoors. If it doesn't, I would encourage you to make it mean spending more time outdoors. One thing that I really try to make sure we do as a family during the summer when we're spending time outdoors is to be barefoot in the soil and garden and interact with the dirt as much as possible. I have a pretty controversial post, actually, called "Why Kids and Adults Need Dirt." I think this is a really important point and something we can really benefit from in the summer. It's much harder in the winter to be outside in the soil and garden.

Thanks to modern hygiene and sanitation, we've seen a lot lower rates of so many diseases and health problems, but too much of a good thing can become a bad thing. I've also written how gardeners can . . . or statistically, people who garden every day live longer and it turns out that the dirt itself may actually play a role in this and that there's a reason . . . a very primal reason that our kids love to play in the dirt and make mud pies.

In our daily lives, we have antibacterial soap, we have antibacterial sprays, we have cleaning wipes; we have everything disinfected, sterile all the time. We go to great lengths to avoid germs. But at the same time, we're seeing rising rates

of allergies and autoimmune problems and gut-related disorders. There's some research that says there could be connection here.

There's research that widespread use of disinfecting and antibacterial products is preventing proper formation of healthy gut bacteria and that restoring this beneficial bacteria could be the key to boosting immune function, avoiding these high rates of allergies and digestive problems and that it may even have a mood-boosting effect. Most people are familiar with good bacteria, but most people think of them as just probiotics or probiotic-rich foods. These definitely are wonderful and necessary. But there's a missing, important factor and that's soil-based organisms or SBOs. These actually have stronger strains of beneficial probiotics that can survive longer in the digestive system. So they provide more benefit. While fermented foods and probiotic supplements can be really beneficial, some of these strains don't survive through the digestive process.

So just as you might have gathered from the name, soil-based organisms are found in the soil and various cultures have known about this for years. There's an old saying that you should eat a peck of dirt before you die and there's a lot of other old wives' tales and wisdom about eating dirt and how much you should eat in a lifetime.

For instance, for our son; our third son had allergies for a long time, including a dairy allergy. Balancing his gut bacteria was a large part of reversing that for

us, but we've realized that he . . . just taking food-based probiotics wasn't working. He actually needed interaction with the more broad spectrum microbial environment of the soil. So we provided an organic dirt garden and let him garden and that was a big part of his recovery and it also, of course, gave him time outside and the Vitamin D and interacting with nature which has so many other benefits.

I think it was Heather from MommyPotamus.com that has talked about this for people with digestive disorders. There was actually a double blind placebo study and researchers found that IBS patients who took a soil-based probiotic had a significant reduction in symptoms after only two weeks. The follow-up found that the patients were still experiencing these benefits a year after discontinuing the probiotic. Because presumably, the probiotic had created a lasting effect.

Hopefully not anybody listening, but for so many modern families, children are inside almost all the time. They're not supposed to play in the dirt, they're not supposed to get dirty and heaven forbid, they should put dirt in their mouth. This might actually be having a detrimental effect on them.

Much to, I think, the chagrin of at least my mother-in-law and many mothers, babies really do have a natural desire to play in the dirt and put dirty objects in their mouths and this actually is an important part of building their immune system. So I've talked before about how at about six months of age, babies

need more iron than breast milk can produce. But about this time, most babies are also on the grounds crawling around and historically, they were probably crawling around on dirt or just natural ground surfaces, not Lysol-ed kitchen tile. So they were interacting with these microbes and certain of these microbes are actually responsible for iron production and for getting iron to the baby. This was a way that the babies were getting iron.

Then also when a baby is doing this, they're getting an immune response from exploring their environments. They're getting small amounts of microbes in their mouth that their immune system can respond to in a safe way and this is creating a strong immune system for them. So when we bypass this process, we're maybe shortcutting their immune formation.

Another study similarly found that kids who grew up on farms or with a dog in the house, not just a dog, but in the house, had fewer allergies and so researchers really started to explore the importance of organisms found in less than sanitized environments. The idea being, obviously, if you have an indoor dog, it's not staying indoors 24/7. It's got to go out to use the restroom and to play. Then the dog is bringing in beneficial microbes that the children are interacting with and that that helps with that process as well.

Obviously, it's wonderful that we've cleaned up contaminated water supplies, cleaned up contamination and actual problems, but also, we're raising our children in such an ultra-clean environment. So, I think this is something

really important that we can let our kids do in the summer is just let them have fun outside in the dirt. I've encouraged my kids from as soon as they could crawl to play outside barefoot in the dirt in an area that I knew was safe that wasn't sprayed with chemicals, that didn't have herbicides and pesticides on it, but in our organic garden, even our babies, I would give them a little pot of organic dirt where they could grow things and usually, nothing would grow because they would kill it. As soon as it got tall enough, they'd want to explore it and look at it. But they were learning through that and they were interacting with the dirt. Now that they're older, they help with our actual garden and honestly, my older kids are better at gardening than I am. So it's paid off in that way as well. That's been an important lives in the summer and just letting kids get dirty. As hard as it is as a mom sometimes and realizing I've got to give five kids a bath and do an entire load of laundry, I can just send them outside. We can eat meals outside during the summer and they can just get clean at night. They get all that wonderful time outside, interacting with a natural environment, getting Vitamin D from the sun. Yeah, it's just been wonderful. That's another kind of unusual tip and thing that I encourage in summer and definitely a soapbox. Sorry for that tangent.

Back to things for the summer. I got a question recently of natural alternatives to typical summer things, typical summer products that people buy like sunscreen and like bug spray. I will post the recipes for these in the show notes at WellnessMama.com. You can click on "Podcasts" and it'll be there.

But just to basically go through some of the theory of it, most bug sprays or a lot of them contain a chemical called DEET and it's one of the most widely used ingredients in store-bought bug sprays. It's shortened term is DEET and it's designed to repel rather than kill insects. It's estimated that about a third of the U.S. population uses DEET every year.

It is approved by the EPA, but it's also a known eye irritant and there's warnings on every bottle that it can cause rashes, soreness and blistering. It's also been linked to neurological problems and according to the EPA, at least 18 different cases of children suffering with neurological effects as well as the deaths of two adults have been associated with DEET. It is not, by any means, inert.

It's also been shown to have a negative impact on wildlife and water sources. So, this is why I don't use it. DEET is actually toxic to birds and aquatic life. So if you're using it on your skin and then you're swimming in a lake or a natural water source or spraying it in the air, you could really be affecting the wildlife population in your area. But thankfully, like I'm always a broken record saying, there's almost always an inexpensive, natural alternative that you can make at home and this is absolutely true with bug spray. In fact, there's two simple, inexpensive ones. One with essential oils and one with actually the herbs themselves. They take seconds to mix up.

So if you're a fan of the essential oil version, you can use either a bug repellent essential oil blend that is available on Amazon or a lot of other places. It would have ingredients like citronella, lemongrass, rosemary, tea tree, eucalyptus, catnip, lavender and mint. You just mix that with distilled water and natural witch hazel and it makes a great bug spray that is much safer than DEET, especially for wildlife. You can also do the same thing with dried or fresh herbs. Those same herbs; citronella, lemongrass, catnip, lavender, peppermint, etc. can just be . . . you can add those to boiling water. Basically make a very strong tea. Let it cool and then add witch hazel for preserving it and I just would keep that in the fridge and just use it as a natural bug spray as well. We've tested these a lot; both, where we live . . . there's lots of flies and mosquitoes and gnats and everything else. They really do work, I think, as well as the commercial versions. I know you don't have to spray the chemical-smelling stuff all over your kids. I'll post the recipe for that, but I just would really encourage you to try the natural solution there.

Same thing with sunscreen, actually. I feel like sunscreen and cosmetics sometimes feel like you can't . . . they're not an easy DIY because when you buy them from a store, they seem so clinical and properly packaged and you need a team of scientists to help you create them. But really, there are natural ingredients that work just as well in most cases, especially for moderate sun exposure.

So as I mentioned before, a lot of sunscreens can contain ingredients that actually promote inflammation in the skin and they almost all block all Vitamin D production, which is becoming a huge problem in our society. There's estimates that over half the population could have a deficiency in Vitamin D. So, I feel like we've kind of cut off our nose to spite our face when it comes to sun exposure. We're trying to avoid skin cancer. But we've shunned the sun as a whole, which is so important for our health.

Not to deny that sunscreen is needed. Sometimes it is and especially if you're going to be out in the sun all day and you're not ready for that type of sun exposure, it would not be a good idea to burn. One solution would obviously be just to cover up with long sleeves and a hat, but most kids aren't a fan of that and I'm honestly not that big of a fan either. But there are things that you can use for different levels of sun exposure.

So for instance, coconut oil is said to have a natural SPF of about 4 to 6. So for short-term sun exposure, that works all by itself. Same with almond oil. It's about 4 to 6 as well. Red raspberry seed oil has an SPF of 25 to 50, so it's really strong. It also is very concentrated and a little bit more expensive. So I usually prefer to blend those together. Shea butter is a natural SPF of 4 to 6. Carrot seed oil is 35 to 40, so another really strong one. Then zinc oxide powder; if you get a non-nano version can be added to any of those to create an actual

physical sun protection barrier on the skin. With any oil bases like that, you can also add beeswax to make it more water-protective.

Depending on what your needs are and your family's needs are in the summer, you can basically just melt any combination of those oils and add zinc oxide if you want and beeswax if you want for the waterproofing and create a natural sunscreen that doesn't have the Retinol-A and all the other toxins that are in a normal sunscreen. Once you have the basic ingredients at home, you can make a whole lot of other beauty products as well. I'll post that recipe as well. Just make sure that you test it on a small area first and don't just lather it on and go out all day for eight hours and hope that it works. Test it with your skin and make sure you know how long you can be out and how long it's going to last for you.

Let's see. Other things . . . just on a random note, somebody asked me this last week. I posted a picture of our family at the beach and they said "What do you do with your hair when you're at the beach? Do you still use your natural shampoo or do you use something different? Does your hair get frizzy?" I actually do still use my mud shampoo. I love that. It's not actually mud, it's healing clays. They don't strip your hair's natural oils, but they pull any dirt and buildup out of there. So I use that.

But at the beach or at home in the summer, I make a beach waves spray that's basically magnesium and salt and you can add a little bit of natural sugar in

there as well, which is fine on your hair, even if you don't eat sugar. This basically creates texture and volume and even stiffness naturally, but without the chemicals and that's really easy to just mix up in two minutes and you've got that for the summer. So just a random tip and I'll post that recipe as well.

Then last but not least, absolutely, is I think it's important to talk about switching to summer meal planning. Because I feel like coming out of the winter and the spring, a lot of us have been eating a lot of sweet potatoes and winter squashes and soups and more wintry foods. I'm a big fan of rotating our meal plan quarterly. So every year, about every three months when the seasons change, I rotate our meal plans. We're about to switch into a summer meal plan that will include more things like cucumbers and summer squashes and greens and lots of fresh herbs and brightly-colored fruits and vegetables.

So, I always recommend that you can find a meal plan that works for your family in the summer and try to base it on seasonal produce, which will not only save you money on your food budget, but also just really helps you get the most nutrients from your food because they're the most in-season and hopefully the most local if you have options for farmers' markets.

One tip that I found helpful is, if you can, create a whole outline of the whole... maybe one month of rotating meals and repeat it three times during the summer. So you've only eaten every three meal three times, but you've got the

plan ahead of time and you know exactly what you need at the farmers' market and at the store each week and it saves a lot of time.

When I'm planning that, I have a daily template. So I'm sort of just starting from scratch like "Oh my gosh, what should I cook?" I try to plan one to two stir fries in the summer, one to two salads. Occasionally, a slow-cooker meal, though I'm not as big of a fan of those in the summer just because it's hot. Then one fish or seafood meal, one or two meals from a different cuisine around the world and then one or two meals that I can prepare ahead and put in the oven.

I try not to use any one protein more than twice in a given week. So maybe only use beef twice or fish twice. That way, it doesn't get boring. Through this process, we figured out that we really have some core recipes that our family likes and these get reused every few weeks. It really helps, I found, if you figure out about 20 core recipes that your family really enjoys and that you can rotate. That way, you can just keep these stored, either on your computer or on index cards. They're there for easy reference and I have a recipe index on WellnessMama.com with lots of free recipes that you can use if any of those are family favorites.

I've also found that protein is typically the most expensive part of the meal. So if you can use less expensive cuts of meat and stretch them with vegetables, it might allow you to work in organic and grass-fed foods into your budget,

rather than conventional meats. This is another reason I love stir fries and casseroles and salads because you can put a lot of vegetables and a little bit of protein and still get a ton of flavor.

Then also, of course, an easy way to mix it up is with spices. So you can take the same exact meal, maybe like a beef and vegetable stir fry and make it taste completely different just by changing the spices. We like one recipe called Pakistani Kima which has curry flavors. But it's really just ground beef and carrots, or sweet potatoes and green beans. But it tastes so flavorful because of the addition of the spices. So, just having a good bulk store of different, favorite spices that your family enjoys really helps make that easier.

I feel like having a meal plan specific to summer and then having it pre-planned really helps take the stress off, especially for those of us who are the cooks in the family. Because I know especially if your kids are in school and then they're home all summer, you've got more hungry people around all the time and just pre-planning that really helps take the load off of that and really simplifies the dinner process.

Let's see. Okay, one other question I had from readers was "What about on vacation or when traveling?" This actually is really fresh on my mind because a few weeks ago, we took a trip with several other families who actually also happened to be bloggers and we all, of course, eat pretty much the same way. But there was a big group of us.

So we were all coming there, eating healthy on the road and then preparing our own meals when we were there and so we had kind of had a system going for this. Again, this is one area where I say planning really helps, especially if you're trying to cook while you're on vacation, because nobody likes to go to be closer to the beach just to cook and clean the exact same amount.

So whenever we're traveling, I try to pre-prepare as much as possible all the meals. So I will make casseroles or stir fries or anything I can at a time and put them in glass containers or any even disposable containers to bring with us so that I can just reheat them. Then on the road, it's easy to just pack kind of a survival box of snacks that includes things like fruits and vegetables, homemade trail mixes, homemade snacks like coconut flour muffins or homemade ground beef beef jerky. Carrot sticks are great for the road. GSE squeezes in squeeze pouches or pre-made smoothies. Just anything you have that helps you avoid having to stop for food because that's usually, at least for our family, really difficult with all the kids.

Then just pretending like you're still at home when you're there. Like I said, it's easier if you pre-prepare stuff so you're not spending vacation cooking. But I know a lot of people have this tendency to go on vacation and go into vacation mode and just eat everything they would not normally eat which isn't very fun because then you end up feeling terrible on vacation. So, just cook like you would at home, bring a meal plan like you would at home. I try to pre-prepare and pack all the meats, especially if I can or all the proteins and

then just supplement with fresh vegetables and produce wherever we are. That not only cuts down our food budget in places where I might not have as good of an access to local farmers and grass-fed beef, but it also just saves a lot of time.

For us, if it's a vacation, we're almost always bringing most of our food with us, doing picnics for lunches while we're out on the beach or exploring and then cooking in-house at night. It really isn't that much more work as long as you put the planning in ahead of time.

I think that is all the questions I had this week pertaining to summer and the transition to summer. I don't know about you, but I'm definitely glad that we're finally there. If you have any other questions, please leave them in the comments under this podcast and I'll be happy to answer them as well and any of the resources or recipes I mentioned will be linked in the show notes at WellnessMama.com. As always, thank you so much for listening and have a healthy week.

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of the "Wellness Mama" podcast where I provide simple answers for healthier families. If you would like to get my "Seven Simple Steps for Healthier Families Guide" for free, head on over to WellnessMama.com and enter your e-mail and I'll send it over to

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