

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

Healthy Moms Podcast

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

Episode 35: GMO's & How to Test for Glyphosate

Katie: Welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. A random fact for your day, did you know that the average fast-food patron consumes 12 pubic hairs per year? I don't know or want to know how they got that statistic, but sadly that may not even be the most disgusting thing found in fast food. Today's guest and I will be talking about food additives and so much more.

Leah Segedie is the founder of Mamavation community and ShiftCon Social Media Conference. She has highly passionate online community of moms, and she started this community after losing 100 pounds herself and learning the true meaning of health. Through her community, she teaches digital moms healthy living practices to combat disease in their home. Her Mamavation community members have lost over 3,500 pounds collectively. Leah is a very passionate food activist and she's worked through organizing petitions and Twitter parties and blogging efforts to support this activism. And she was named as "Mom of the Year" by "Shape Magazine" and has received various other awards for her blogging and activism. Leah, welcome.

Leah: Thank you, Katie. Thanks so much for having me on. How are you doing?

Katie: I'm great. I'm so excited to finally talk to you. I feel like we've known each other online, or known of each other online for so long, and it's nice to finally put a face and voice with the name.

Leah: I'm a fan girl, total fan girl of you. You're awesome.

Katie: Oh, and ditto, you as well. And one thing I know that we both talked about, we both are moms and you have three children, and we both have written in the past about the power of moms. And I have a hashtag campaign called "just a mom" that really encourages women and moms to step into their power and own it and realize how much of an impact we have on society, and how much power we have. And you did a post about this recently, as well, talking about why big companies should listen to moms. So can you elaborate on this? I love this topic, but let's talk about why are moms so important to create change?

Leah: Well, you know, I really think it's important for us as moms to empower ourselves and to understand exactly how powerfully we are. And just to give you an example of this, women represent, and moms represent, \$2.4 trillion in the marketplace. And just sit back and imagine how huge that is. We represent \$2.4 trillion, women alone are representing \$7 trillion, but we represent \$2.4 trillion. That means we're making the vast majority of all those purchases, collectively we're powerful. We could stop the industry. I mean, we could stop everything if we wanted to. So I mean, just bringing it back for a second, we're about 75% of us are the primary shoppers for our homes. You know, we are doing 80% of the health care decisions, we're the ones that are spending the money in the grocery store, we're the ones that are organizing the calendar. Everything that has to do with our family, and everything in our family, and the things that we buy, the things that we do, we're in control of all of that. And that represents a lot of money.

And then not only that, if you're looking at how women have changed in the past, say, 10 years which is the advent of social media, we're now online and we're social creatures, we're mentioning brands. It's about an average of 73 times per week, and that might sound like a lot, but that's an average for the average person of things that you're sharing, things that you're talking about, things that you're doing. That's a lot of brand engagement. And we're also doing this 28% more than men. So we're really, really, really active in social media, which has become the medium for people to get all of their information. Seventy-eight percent of us

are using the internet to make product decisions. That means we're going to our friends online and we're saying, "Hey, did you like that? Or did you not like that?" We're no longer owned by the radio and the television in a one-way communication form, now everything is two-way. We're engaging with each other, we're talking with each other, it's pretty much all word of mouth. And women are making 58% of all those online purchases.

So if you just look at the marketing potential of who we are, how we are in the market place, what kind of target audience we are, what kind of a monster we are, you know, just empowering ourselves to understand that, that is where we get our power, it's because we're in control of everything. We're social beings, we're on the internet, we're chatting, we're encouraging, we're finding the information. So it comes down to that. And if we could only...you know what I'm saying? If we organized ourselves, in a way, we can impact everything. I mean, moms have organized petitions, online activism to do things, to create all kind of change, and you only have to turn on the internet and look in social media just for a couple of minutes just to see what kind of impact we've had recently.

I mean, I think it was just a couple of days ago that Taco Bell and Pizza Hut just said that they were gonna take out artificial additives and preservatives and high-fructose syrup and, you know, things like that from their food. These are fast food companies we're talking about. You know, like you go to fast food, you don't think you're getting healthy food, but even these companies that are selling unhealthy food are going, "Oh my gosh, what are we gonna do?" This is all the impact and the power of moms, and it's how we are. We're literally a powerhouse to create change in the marketplace. And it's so exciting to be part of this, and it's so exciting to be a leader, and a helper, and an organizer in just working with these issues. I just love what I do for a living.

Katie: Yeah, that's awesome and I absolutely agree. I feel like moms are especially powerful, too, because we have the motivation of our children. Because like for me, my own story was that I really pushed myself too hard in high school and college and didn't sleep and had too much stress and ate horrible, which is like the perfect way to create health problems. And once I had a child, like I already knew I needed to fix things for me, but once I had a child and read what the future was gonna be for me my child's generation, it was like the mama lion in me came out. And I got such a passion to help change that because really, yeah, all of us as moms, we don't want our children to face the future that they could have if all of these continued as it was going. So I agree, I think we're just a very, very powerful group, and especially as we, more and more, unite on these different topics to change them, I think we have so much power. It's amazing.

Leah: And I think what you're saying to me is you're saying that you changed based on wanting to provide something better for your children, and what you're saying to me is exactly what like 99.9% of, you know, moms feel out there. Once we start having children and our lives change and our priorities change, all of a sudden we do things differently. You know, we eat healthier, we live better, we do all these things to protect them, and to do things for them.

And a little bit about my own story of my weight loss. I started off as a size 22, and I was a big girl my entire life. In fact, I think at, you know, the age of 9 I weighed 120 pounds, you know, or 125 pounds, which is a really big 9-year-old. And so, spending my whole life overweight to that extent, it was really hard on me emotionally. And when I finally had my first son and I thought about what it was that I wanted to do for my son and what kind of a mom I wanted to be, the only thing that I could feel in my heart was that I didn't want them to deal with the societal, emotional impact that I had, you know, things to my health, and my emotional well-being, and how people treated me in school, and all of those things. And that is what sparked my weight loss. It

wasn't anything to do with me that I wanted to look better, I wanted to feel better, it had nothing to do with me. It had everything to do with role-modeling behavior and wanting better for my kids, and it came from a very different part of my soul and my heart.

And it reflects everything that you said where you changed your health and your life and things about you because you wanted things that are better for your kids. And I think that's really where the power moms, the basis of it comes. We are that mother lion, we are collectively, we care for our kids, and we want a better community, and that's all we want. And to hell with everybody, let's push them over and get rid of them, you know what I mean, because you're not getting in the way of our kids, and it's powerful. And you know, any mom would just very easily toss their child aside and stand in front of that train and take the train, right, or lift a car and have this amazing strength, and every single one of us has that inside of us and every single one of us can impact change on a really big level.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. I've always said that having your first child, it's like awakening a sleeping giant in you, like a part of you, you didn't even know existed. And I think if we just, like you said, unite that power, we really can create change almost overnight. Can you talk a little bit more about your weight loss, like what was that journey for you and what things did you change? Because I know a lot of women struggle with weight.

Leah: Yeah, I mean, when I first started, I had no idea. First of all, I didn't set out to lose 100 pounds. I didn't even think I could. I spent my whole life on fat-free diets or whatever, you know, to try lose weight and was never able to, and it was just like an exercise in failure. And so, I think that exercise in failure is what made my self-esteem so bad when I was younger, you know, I didn't really like myself, and I think it was. It was just like I was constantly failing at losing weight, and it was just like, "Why can't I get this right," you know?

So when I set out, I didn't set out to lose 100 pounds, I set to just lose 5 pounds. I mean, and I was at a size 22. I have a condition called hip dysplasia, and what it literally means is that my hip bones pop out of socket, and it's not a fun thing when it happens, but when I'm that heavy, it's really tough to walk. And it's kind of like bone grinding on bone. I don't have as much as cartilage as the average person. So the only thing that I changed was I literally said, "Okay, no more diet soda," because I drink diet soda like it was going out of style. I had like six Diet Cokes a day. I'm not even joking about that. It was like water to me. I don't even think I drank water. It was nothing but diet soda. And I would go to, you know, a fast food joint probably daily, most likely for breakfast. That's usually how I would get breakfast before I went to work. And you know, I just started walking. So I dropped soda, I didn't do any fast food, and I started walking. And when I say walking, it was around my condo complex. It wasn't even around the block, it wasn't even that far.

And I did that for a week and I lost five pounds just like that. I mean, it just came off so quickly and I thought to myself, I'm like "Wow, that was quick, and that was a lot of weight." And I thought to myself, "Hmm." All I did was focus on a small number. I focused on a small number because it was something that was digestible. It was something I could handle emotionally. It wasn't something that overwhelmed me. I knew I was, you know, a big girl and I knew five pounds, in the grand scheme of things, wasn't very big to most people, but to me, it was a huge deal because I was able to actually accomplish something. And so it really encouraged me to think about my weight loss differently. It wasn't about losing 100 pounds, it was about losing 5 pounds, 3 pounds, 2 pounds. It was just about getting one thing done, one little tiny thing done, and I knew that those little things would add up.

So, you know, it was walking for me. And I did more walking and more walking, and you know, I was eating

better and better. And then, the next thing you know I noticed that the walking became a little bit easier and I wanted something more challenging, and so I started doing Tae Bo and that became my love. And the reason is because...I loved kickboxing and Tae Bo because, first of all, it makes me feel really powerful because you're learning offensive and defensive moves that you can also use to protect yourself if someone comes at you or hits you or, God forbid, harms my children, or you know what I mean, anything like that. It was so useful to have. And number two, it just felt really good and it felt like I was doing something. And I started to realize, you know, the more activity I was getting, the better I felt.

We have a lot of depression that runs in my family, and I actually had an uncle that was bipolar. And he was so bad, he actually had shock treatment every six months just to, you know, live a normal life. And he ended up dying of complications to pharmaceutical drugs. That's what ended up happening to him, that the drugs he took for his depression ended up killing up his liver and his kidneys and he died. He wasn't on a liver transplant list because, you know, they didn't think that that was possible because he was gonna be taking those drugs again. So he wasn't viable and he ended up dying, and I think it was about...Jeez, was it five years ago? It's about five years ago. So I mean, my uncle, I was thinking of him, and all of sudden I was finding myself that, you know, as I'm eating better and getting exercise, I was feeling better, I was like happy, I was just like energetic, I was optimistic, and those were qualities that I lacked back then.

And so, it kind of made me addictive to the sweat, and I really like the sweat. And today, if I don't sweat once every three days, I'm not a nice person, you don't wanna be around me. So I make it priority, and I just started doing that. And so over the period of 2 years, and it was 2 long years, it took me two years to loss over 100 pounds. It was about 60 pounds the first year, and 40 pounds the second year. And you know, when I got down to these little tiny, itty-bitty jeans, which were a size eight...but some people are like, "Oh my God, that's not a small size." But to me, coming from a size 22, a size 8 jean, you know, at that point in time, that's a really small size.

So it did take me a lot of time. It was more like the mindset of five pounds at a time. When I would lose five pounds, I'd always weigh myself naked on the scale at the same time of day, it was like 10:00 a.m., I'd weigh myself naked on the scale. And if I had lost five pounds, I would jump up and down naked and like do this crazy little dance, you know what I mean, and I would act like a silly little fuddy-duddy because like, you know, it was so empowering to me. And you know, I'm an intelligent person, I did well in school, I accomplished a lot before then, but that was the one thing that I could not get down. And it became the one thing that empowered the most, you know.

So I was a mom for the first time, and I was also able to lose 100 pounds. And so, just anybody who's out there listening who struggles with their weight, what I would say is, first of all, diet advice is a dime a dozen because everybody's body is different. And in fact, if you get your DNA analyzed, and there's companies out there like Genesys that can analyze your DNA, they can tell you some people need more fat, some people need more carbohydrates, some people need more protein, you know, everybody's different. You know, so there's no one size fits all. And I think it's a matter of discovering how your body reacts and then just continuing to do that, and then giving yourself patience and giving yourself the ability to fall.

And you know, the other thing that I did was when I fell flat on my face, and say I would...you know, there were weeks where I was just like, "Forget this, I'm done." And I would go out and binge for a week, and I'd come back and I would gain weight. Instead of me giving up and, you know, not going forward, what I said instead was I said, "You know what, I'm human, that's okay. I'm just gonna get up and keep walking." And you

know, did I think I was perfect, like am I Jesus walking on the water? No. So I need to just be better to myself. And I think the exercise that I was doing allowed me to think more positively. So I would recommend, you know, I would say nutrition and losing weight is all in the kitchen. It's always the things that you're eating, but the exercise really helped me with my positivity and it helped me just understand and be better. And it's also really healthy for your heart and everything else.

So those are the little tips I have. I did do a couple of programs, like I think I started off with Weight Watchers, but Weight Watchers pushes so much crappy food on you that I stopped going into those meetings. But I did lose a ton of weight by counting points, but I never ate the stuff that they gave me because I started to also look into ingredients. And that was the other thing that I started doing is, as I was losing weight, I was starting to pay attention more to ingredients. And this got me where I am today where I would just start reading the ingredients like, "What is in this?" And when I would read things, I'd be like, "What the heck is that?" And I would go to Google and I would Google it because I was just like, "Well, I'm eating this, I should know what it is."

And I was dumbfounded by, you know, how many things that I was eating that had petroleum in it. You know what I mean, like coal tar. That's from the ground, like way down, miles down there. You know, like I was just floored finding out the ingredients that was in the food supply that I was eating that I thought was "healthy" because the fitness and weight loss industry was pushing it. You know, and that was another thing where I didn't fit in with those fitness weight loss people because it was like, "But you're pushing this, and this has high-fructose corn syrup in it, and it's like enriched flour, and it's got all this stuff in it that that can't be good for me." And I didn't know as much as I know now, but I instinctively understood that if I put stuff in my body that was not natural, my body probably didn't know what it was and it probably wasn't reacting the way I wanted it to.

So that also helped me get to where I am today, where I became a full-blown food activist because by focusing on my nutrition, I started learning about what it was, and the dangers of what could happen when you spend years and years of your life eating things that are, you know, not good for you. But you know, again, if I were to give anyone advice, I'm assuming that the people that are listening to this podcast are pretty much already into healthy food, but if they're not, I would really encourage you, number one, to be patient with yourself and to kind of take it a little bit at a time and five pounds at a time. But number two, start looking into the ingredients in what you're eating and became like an investigative reporter. You know, Google these ingredients, find out what they are, where they come from, ask yourself, why are you eating them? And why are they in the food I'm eating, and are they of any benefit to you? And if you can answer those questions to you and say, "Yes, they're a benefit to me," then eat it, you know. But if you have any trepidation or anything where you feel like, "I don't know," don't eat it, you know, and it's as simple as that.

Katie: I love both of those tips. And I think, yeah, that's something I've said also in the past is it's not just about the calories. I mean, calories obviously are a unit of energy, but also about the chemicals and those aren't necessarily measured in calories. And I love that you say that as well. And then that your point about small steps, I think that's huge because to start from the beginning and think, "I've got to lose 100 pounds" is so overwhelming. It will be easy just to give up. Whereas, five pounds, okay, that's doable, and I love that idea for people. But you mentioned being a food activist, and you have been an outspoken advocate for GMO labeling, and you have publicly led petitions and activism against companies that use or promote GMO products. And so I know this is a controversial topic, and there are many people actually in favor of GMOs because a lot of people think they're the only hope we have of feeding everybody on the planet. But talk us through why

GMOs are such a problem and why we really need to work for change in this area.

Leah: Well, you know, the problem with GMOs is there's really no direct benefit to the consumer, and that's what it boils down to. We're being forced to eat something that does not directly benefit us in any way, shape or form. All of the benefits go to other people. They don't go to us. But all of the risk is us. So we get to take on the vast majority of the risk by eating them, and then we don't get any benefit out of it, and then they're not labeling it.

So it's kind of you look at that and you're like, wait a minute, you know? It's one thing to have pharma in pharma, it's another thing to have pharma in food. And that's kind of how I look at it. They've taken food and they created into it like a pharmaceutical drug or something that only happens in a lab or that something that can't happen in nature, and they're not labeling it, they're not telling us about it. And then they're looking at us like, "Wait a minute, you're just a dumb mom." No, I'm sorry, but I want this stuff labeled because I wanna know. I wanna know if it's in my food.

So I mean, part of the problem that we have here, you know, it's the unknown risks, but there's a lot of things that we don't know about genetically modified ingredients, and that's part of the problem, we don't know. We don't know. There's not enough independent research. A lot of the research that we have is corporate research. And I'm a mom, I don't like corporate research. I want independent stuff. I wanna know that, you know, if a scientist is doing something, he doesn't have an ulterior motive. And right now, I don't feel like we have that out there, and that's just my opinion.

But if you look at what we do know, the things that we do really know, we know that GE crops have increased herbicide use. And what that is, you know, herbicide is, we're mostly talking about Monsanto's Roundup, and so Roundup is one of those things, you know, you can get it in Lowe's, you can get it in Home Depot, you buy it and it kills weeds, and we all know what it is. But so this is where 78% of GMO crops have been manufactured so that they can withstand heavy uses and heavy doses of an ingredient called glyphosate, and glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup. So when I say glyphosate, just think of Monsanto's Roundup. You know, it's the same thing.

So they've been engineered to withstand heavy doses of this stuff, and it's increased. So from like 1996 to 2012, we know that it's increases 527 million pounds more. That's how much it has increased in farmlands, in our food supply, 527 million pounds. Glyphosate is found in the air, it's found in the water, it's found in our food. In fact, the U.S. Geological Survey, they did a survey and they found that 60% to 100% of our rainwater in the Midwest farming communities contains glyphosate. It's literally raining toxic herbicides in the farm community in the Midwest, literally raining it. It's coming down on us. They've also found glyphosate in umbilical cords, in breast milk, in urine. They found it in everybody.

And so, the question is well, okay, so you're forcing us to eat this stuff because you're not labeling it, right, we don't get a choice. And now, it's in everything, it's in umbilical cords, that means they're inside babies before they are even born. So babies are becoming pre-polluted with this stuff. We don't know a lot about it, we don't know what's going on, and they're not labeling it. So there's the GMO crops that are herbicide-resistant and then there's the other crops. And those, that's a corn, they've taken corn and this is called BT corn. They've taken this toxin, which is naturally occurring in the dirt, and it's called BT, and they've inserted it into corn so that when bugs eat the corn their stomachs basically implode and they die. And then the other bugs go, "Hmm, maybe it's not a good idea to eat that corn," and then they scatter away.

So two things are happening with that. This is the only food, this is the only plant, you know, like plant that's been registered at the EPA as a pesticide, and this is the vast majority of the corn that we're eating in the United States. It's registered as a pesticide at the EPA. And so, that's something that I think is material. I wanna know about that. I wanna know if the corn I'm serving my children is registered as a pesticide in the EPA. I'd like to choose to purchase or not purchase it, but I at least wanna be able to have the information to make that decision. We're not given that information right now.

So the other thing we have, and what's really, really important to know is that the World Health Organization just came out, I wanna say two three, months ago, and said, "The glyphosate is a probable carcinogen." And from what I understand, it wasn't a matter of, "Ooh, we don't know, maybe it is." It was a matter of, "Oh my gosh, maybe we should just be a little conservative and say it's a probable instead of a hardcore." So they chose probable carcinogen. So we're now spraying this stuff. This stuff that's a probable carcinogen is now increased by 527 million pounds. It's found in 60% to 100% of the rainwater in the Midwest. It's showing up in umbilical cords, it's showing up in breast milk, it's showing up in urine, it's showing up in everything, and they're telling us we don't have a right to know about this? I mean, it's kind of insane to me. You know, I mean...

And what I'm doing right is I'm working with Just Label It, and Just Label It is a nonprofit organization that really, really works on the federal level and works on the FDA, and lobbies, and tries to really talk about labeling in the federal, it's a federal thing. So I'm encouraging anybody who's listening to sign this petition, and I'm gonna tell you what we're doing. They've already received over 1.5 million people petitioning the FDA saying, "Label our food," and the FDA just kind of like, "Eh, whatever" to us. And so what they've realized is, you know, okay, so the FDA is not listening, but companies always listen because what happens is when you pressure companies things start happening because the companies go, "Oh my God."

So what they're doing instead, and I'm helping them, is we're petitioning Quaker Oats. It sounds like crazy, but Quaker Oats is owned by...its parent company is PepsiCo. And PepsiCo and all of their friends have spent over \$100 million, \$100 million, \$100 million to stop labeling. They've spent it in California, they've spent it in Oregon, they've spent it in Colorado, they've spent it in Washington, to stop these state labeling efforts. And they've been funneling all this money. So we're petitioning Quaker saying, "Hey, Quaker Oats, we have a right to know. We want you to agree with us and stand with us saying that you also believe we have a right to know what's in our food." And we're also asking them to stop funding anti-labeling efforts. So we want them to stop. We want PepsiCo and Quaker Oats to stop doing this. And so, it's a petition, and anybody can sign this petition and put pressure on them by going to justlabelit.org/quaker, justlabelit.org/quaker.

Help me pressure Quaker Oats, and you can also tweet at them, you could Facebook them. I highly, highly, highly suggest you pepper them with as much as you possibly can in social media because remember what I said about how powerful moms are, and Quaker Oats is one of those brands that trades on the trust of moms. I would actually say that just closing my eyes, as a kid and as a mom, I probably loved Quaker Oats because I just think of oatmeal. You know what I mean, I'm just thinking it's a party, and it's wonderful, and you know, I'm a mom, and I just love. But you know, Quaker Oats is funneling, or they are doing something, to me, in my opinion, that's a little dirty. So how do you trade on trust to a mom and market yourself as trustworthy, and yet, spend this much money to try to stop us from knowing what's in the food? So that's what I'm encouraging people to do for that.

Katie: Yeah, that's awesome. And I think we live in somewhat of a farming area also, and especially our house we lived in before this one, there was 100 acres of corns, wheat, and soybeans that were grown near us. And I would see them come through with the huge tractors and the guys in hazmat suits and spray this multiple times throughout a growing season and just like clouds of Roundup on the food. And I think it's easy for us to think like, "Oh, it's just pesticides, it washes away." But really, it's actually built into the DNA of these plants.

And I think also the important distinction that we often forget is because you hear people say we need GMOs and we need this like more advanced plant forms to be able to grow more food, to feed more people. And there's a huge difference between like selective hybriding and like using the natural process of a plant to breed two versions together and create a better version, which people do in gardens all the time, and like injecting the DNA of an herbicide into a plant so that it can withstand the herbicide. I think there's a big difference there, and I think people often don't necessarily understand that. And so they hear the argument that we need GMOs to feed people, and they're torn. And also Monsanto does a great job of marketing for, you know, how they support farmers and all this stuff, which they don't. But I also wanna go back to the testing. So you mentioned that people can get tested, and I have done this. I haven't gotten my results yet because I took a while to send in my test, but there is now a test that you can test various fluids for glyphosates. So can you talk about that and how it works and how people can do it?

Leah: Yeah, so there's an organization called Feed The World, and you can go to feedtheworld.org, and I highly suggest everybody goes there, because right now what they're doing is anybody in the world can test themselves for glyphosate. And it's really easy, you know, you get a little urine cup, you pee in the urine cup, you know, you close it, you put in the mail, you send it off to them. And I think, I believe, within four weeks you get your results back. It goes to a lab, and I believe the lab is certified by the EPA so it doesn't have false positives. It's a really awesome lab that they're working with. And so, you know, it's something where this has never been available to the average consumer before. So if you're concerned about where you live, do you live in a farming community? Are you just a mom that just eats and wants to know, you know, how your kids are, you know what I mean, like what's inside your children? Are you curious about this chemical? And if you are, go to feedtheworld.org and get a test, buy a test and submit it, and find out. Because at the end of the day, what we really need to is empower ourselves with information.

And if you have information, then what you can do is take this information to your grocery store, and say, "Hey I tested at, you know, I don't know, a 2.5, you know, on the scale, and I'm getting all my food from you. What the heck is going on here?" You know, we can start pressuring people with that information, and I think it's really important to have that information because, number one, you know, you know what's going on, and number two, you can share it if you want to. I would say you're probably more likely to share what you got than what your children have, and that's fine. Share it with grocery stores, share it, you know, with the cities and the counties, share it with the park districts and the school districts because this is information that's material to them because, number one, they're spraying. You know, they're spraying at schools, they're spraying in park districts, they're spraying in open spaces, they're spraying this stuff. But it's also in our food, and how much of it is in our food? And supposedly, this was never supposed to happen, we were never supposed to be able to find it in our bodies. And we are, and so I think the more of us that get tested, and the more of us that have this information, we're gonna be able to pressure the people that need to be pressured to stop more effectively.

Katie: Yeah, definitely. And I think it's also important to note, and maybe you can talk about this a little bit, that glyphosate is banned in a lot of countries both for use and in food, and a lot of things. Can you talk about

that and how there's kind of a double standard?

Leah: Yeah, well, we have 64 countries around the world that are either banning or labeling GMOs. So it's the vast majority of, you know, industrialized nations are already labeling this stuff, they already know what's going on. But just recently, I'll tell you what just recently happened. Sri Lanka just came out, I believe this week or last week, and completely banned it. Bermuda is another one that's completely banned it just recently, and this is since the World Health Organization said that glyphosate was probably carcinogenic. This is the outfall. So it's Sri Lanka already, Bermuda. And this is the one that kind of makes me giggle a little bit not because it's funny, but just because it's so ironic.

But in Colombia, you know, that is where they have the vast majority of the cocaine plants, right, the coca plants. And you know, the U.S. and Colombia has always had this agreement where they were gonna like deforest the coca plants, and so they sprayed glyphosate in Colombia like pretty much anywhere that they have it. And they go over with these airplanes and...glyphosate bomb everything, kind of like they did with Agent Orange during Vietnam. By the way, same company, Monsanto. But so, Colombia just said that they're gonna stop doing this, and so people were kind of like online...I wanna explain that the reason Colombia stopped spraying this is because there's obvious health effects. There's obvious health effects of people that are gonna be around glyphosate, that are gonna be inhaling it, that are gonna be, you know, touching it or it's in their food or in their anything.

So Colombia has stopped, and you know, I'm hearing people online, they're saying, "Oh, now you can get glyphosate-free cocaine, but you can't get glyphosate-free food, or you can't get it labeled," you know. And even though that's kind of funny, you know, it is also very ironic when you think about it that even Colombia themselves understand that this is bad for their people, and so they stopped doing it. And they've said to United States, "You know what, you just need to sit there and just deal with it because we're done. We're done with Monsanto, we're done with glyphosate, we're not gonna kill our people for you." And that's what they've said.

You know, it's one of those things where, you know, countries that ban, countries that, you know, do this, they're being very wise because at the end of the day, you don't want people to get sick. These are things that have long-term implications. So these are things that, you know, people are getting cancer from, these are things that, you know, people are, you know, having infertility issues from. If you really wanna go into what the problems are with glyphosate, you know, what do we know about Roundup? What do we know about glyphosate? Well, right now we know it's an endocrine disruptor. We know that it disrupts, you know, your endocrine, and you know, those are your hormones. And so anything that you can think of that's related to your hormones, like the ability to have children, you know, or how big your butt is. What they know now is that things that are endocrine disruptors are also very likely to impact your weight and how much weight you gain. So therefore, glyphosate could very well be classified as an obesogen in the near future just because it's an endocrine disruptor.

The other thing we know is that it causes birth defects and it causes tumors. We already know this about glyphosate. We also know that it's something called a chelator. So for people that don't know what a chelator is, that binds needed metals in your body, it binds them together and removes them. So these are metals that we need, like iron and magnesium and zinc. So having something inside you that's a chelator, it's not a little thing, it's a big deal. The other thing we know is it's an antibiotic. When glyphosate was first registered, it was registered as an antibiotic. It's something that kills bacteria. And now we know how important having good

bacteria is in our body, how important it is to have healthy gut flora, you know, how important bacteria is to our survival, now that we know this. But glyphosate kills bacteria. So we shouldn't be eating if we just wanna be healthy in general. We also know it's linked to cancers and other illnesses and fertility, stuff like that, and it damages cells at the cellular level. It damages cellular DNA.

So we already know all of this about glyphosate, and now we know that it's a probable carcinogen, according to the World Health Organization. So country after country after country is really looking at this going, "Oh my God. Oh my God." It's also the most popular herbicide in the world. So the world right now is looking at Monsanto and saying, "Really, dude? Like really, what have you been doing to us? And what did you lie to us about?" And I mean, if you know the history of Monsanto, they have a reputation of not telling the truth about their products. I mean, Agent Orange, prime example, you know, DDT, perfect example. I mean, a lot of these, a lot of these chemical compounds that they've created, they have sworn up and down, sworn up and down, "Will do no damage to humans. Will do no damage to the environment." And then we find out that years and years and years later, that they were lying. And so what makes us think that they're telling the truth now when, you know, they rely so heavily on this one chemical? There is no upside for them to tell us the true health impacts.

So, you know, it's another reason why moms just really need to be cautious and really start thinking about these issues. You know, go get your family tested. And then after you go get them tested, what we're recommending is eat an all-organic diet for two weeks, and get tested again and see if there's any difference, because I promise you there will be. And if you've seen that video online, there's this really awesome video online about a Swedish family that did not eat organic and then ate all organic for about two weeks, and then you see the levels of pesticide their body and how dramatically it changed. You can make such an impact in just two weeks of eating clean and eating organic food or food that you've produced in your background that you know has no toxic synthetic pesticides on it.

Katie: Yeah, I'm really curious to see what our result is. And another thing that we now know that glyphosates impact, and that we've actually known for a long time, is the insect population, and especially bees, which of course, they're our main pollinator. Honeybees pollinate the majority of the food that we eat. And we're seeing a decline in the honeybee population, which long-term is a huge ecological problem. And I actually, in college, worked in an entomology lab, just as a part-time job, and back then even they knew what an impact this was having and they were concerned about it. And so it's just amazing and scary to see how many aspects of our life that this is reaching. But like you said, I wanna maybe go back to a point of hope on this because it can seem like, "Oh my gosh, everything is toxic and we're all gonna die." But what are some things that moms especially can do that are practical and tangible to start avoiding these chemicals? Obviously, an organic diet is the first one. Is there anything else that we can do or avoid or be cautious of?

Leah: Yeah, I mean, eating organic food is the number one thing that I would recommend to people if they want to avoid toxic, persistent pesticides in their food. And that's just because, you know, if you're not putting into your body consistently, it's not gonna be in your body. We're lucky that these things do drain, like you pee them out basically, you get rid of them, your body gets rid of them. But if you're constantly putting them in your body, your body doesn't have the ability to get rid of them. So that's what, you know, I would really, really recommend. You don't need to go on a juice diet, you don't need to do those kind of things. You just need to eat organic for, you know, just two weeks, and that would make a huge improvement in what's actually in your body.

And then the other thing, you know, there's a lot of things that we know about natural products and personal care. You know what I mean, there's other parts of your life that, if you're ready for it...because remember what I said in the beginning about, you know, do things a little at a time. It's like if you wanna eat an elephant, you eat one bite a time. You can't stuff the whole damn thing in your mouth and just, you know, expect it to work. It doesn't work like that, and I believe that just like with weight loss, this is the same. It's like, you wanna bite off only so much as you can chew. And you also wanna make sure that you get your family's, you know buy-in on this. And you know, your family might not be so keen to this right away, which is why I think it's probably prudent and wise for you to do just a little bit of it at a time. And if you're able to swap out things for organic brands that they like and there's an easy swap in organic, awesome. If there isn't, then you got to start to going down to the whole food level. You know, start going down to things that you're making yourself in your kitchen with ingredients that you know and trust. And that's the best way to ensure, you know, that you're able to do this.

But then, when we're talking about other things in your home, like I would say personal care products, you know, there's other chemicals that we have in our shampoo and conditioners and our lotions and our, you know, body washes, in our, you know, air fresheners, and these things are just as toxic and sometimes more so than the food that we're eating. And so, you know, things like parabens. Parabens are found in shampoo and conditioners. Parabens are also found in breast cancer tumors. You know, these are things that we would start avoiding. And so, as you're doing food, take a look at, you know, your personal care products and just say, "Hmm, I'm wondering, what's in that shampoo? And maybe I could just buy one different shampoo," or maybe go to your cosmetics or something like that. And just to give you an idea of...you know, it's not like, you know, we're doing this with food in America, we're doing it with all products.

So in Europe, there's 1,328 ingredients that are banned in personal care products alone. And in the U.S. we've only banned 11. So that gives you kind of an idea of what it is that America is not doing that the rest of the world is doing, you know. And at the end of the day, it boils down to money, and it boils down to industry and commercialism, and we've put that over health and safety. But to moms who are shopping in the grocery store, if you really want change, your best vote is with your pocketbook. Your pocketbook represents more votes than you ever could at the ballot box. You know what I'm saying? There's more change there.

So I would say, you know, eat organic, start supporting those brands that you know are doing the right thing, and give those brands money. And the reason I say that is because in order for things to be possible, they have to be sustainable. And in order for things to be sustainable, they have to be profitable. And if we can give profit to the companies that are doing the right thing, that sends a huge message to the companies that are not doing the right thing. And they will start changing, and we're seeing that already.

Just within the last two years, how many companies have said, "Okay, fine, we're taking it out?" I mean, like every single week I feel like there's some brand that's taking something out, like even Walmart. Walmart, like this week or it was last week, they said, "Hey, we're getting into animal rights. And so we're gonna do this, this, this and this," improving on chickens and all the animal products that they have in Walmart. That's huge. Tyson is gonna be talking out human antibiotics. McDonald's is gonna be taking out human antibiotics. These are all things that are happening just because us as moms have decided to make one purchase over the other. So that's what I'm saying, vote with your dollar, eat organic, start looking at your other personal care products, start asking questions, and just start being a little bit more of a detective because you have the ability to.

Katie: Absolutely, and I'll make sure to include links to all the stuff that you've talked about, and especially to

the Just Label It and Feed The World for people. But can we shift gears and talk about ShiftCon because that's your other brainchild, and I wanna hear you explain it to all of us and tell people how they can come if they want.

Leah: Yeah, as I'm doing all my activism and, you know, I do a lot of organizing bloggers online. And so, if there's something going, I'm probably reaching out to you, like Katie, I reached out to you and said, "Support us with this," you know. And I've been doing that for years, and what I realized was in our niche of blogging, which is health, wellness, food, sustainability, there is no central location. There's no place that we had to go to support ourselves, to encourage ourselves to kind of meet up, to hang out, and have it just be about social media and have it just be about enacting change. And that's what I created.

I created a social media conference for bloggers that are into food, that are into wellness, that are into, you know, healthy products, you know, natural products, activism and sustainability. I call these bloggers "eco-wellness bloggers" because, to me, that describes what we're doing. We're eco and we're also wellness at the same time. And everything that we do kind of has that in it. And everything that we live has that in it. And so, this is a social media conference where we have about 24 workshops and panels from experts and other bloggers talking about, you know, better tips in social media, getting information about, you know, all of the stuff out there from genetically modified ingredients and what's happening in that to personal care products to, you know, the newest products that are coming out from the brands that you love. And we also have an expo with just over 50 brands in the expo. So bloggers can interact with the brands that they love that mirror their values. And we have really, really, really strict standards on who can be in here with us and who cannot, and it's based on what are the ingredients, what do you have in your product?

So it's really a place where, you know, the eco wellness niche can come once a year, sing "Kumbaya," learn from each other, learn from experts, drink kombucha cocktails, which are awesome by the way, GMO-free food, we provide all GMO-free food, which is really not easy to do but I do it with the most love and care possible, and hang out as well with brands and nonprofits. We're also bringing with us about 12 NGOs that work really hard in all of these fields that we're talking about, in all these themes, like from Friends of the Earth to GMO Inside to the Pesticide Action Network to Just Label It will be there, Healthy Child, Healthy World, and numerous others will be there, you know, giving us, you know, the most recent or the most up-to-date information on all the things that we care about.

And so, come hang out with us. It's gonna be from September 24th to September 26th. It's in Manhattan Beach, California, right by the beach. Actually, it's a 10K from the beach and if you wanted to run down there, it'd be awesome. The hotel is the Marriott, and it's absolutely beautiful. So come out to California in September and, you know, just hang out with us. I think you guys would have a great, great, great time. And it's mostly for content creators. So it's all of the information that is going to be skewed for someone who is creating content online. And so most of the people there are gonna be bloggers, but there's also businesses that are gonna be there as well, you know, other people. Sometimes we just have some people, but I recommend you have some social media presence to come.

Katie: Awesome, yeah, and I'll make sure to include that link as well. Where else can people find you online?

Leah: Well, you can find me on Twitter as Bookieboo, B-O-O-K-I-E-B-O-O. You could also find me at mamavation.com. Mamavation.com is my website where we do disease prevention for moms, and you know, all the information that we put out there is, you know, the latest and the greatest on everything. And it's food,

it's personal care products, it's natural, you know, it's giving you and arming you with information that you need to live in your home a disease prevention type of lifestyle, a wellness lifestyle. And you can also find us on Facebook. On Facebook, you know, Mamavation. Then, I also do ShiftCon. If you wanna reach ShiftCon, it's shiftconmedia.com. And then the other thing I have is I also have a blogging network, and we work with about just over 10,000 bloggers and we pair bloggers with about 120 of my clients that are all natural, organic brands that I have scrubbed myself to make sure that the ingredients are just the way I like them. And so we do that as well. So if you're a blogger and you want some opportunities, paid opportunities and stuff like that, sign up at bookieboo.com. And there is that. And well, I mean, I'm everywhere, actually. Now I'm on your podcast as well.

Katie: Awesome, and I'll put links to all of that and to all of your social media so that everybody can connect with you. Thank you so much for taking the time to be here and for your passion and your activism.

Leah: Thanks for having me, Katie. I really appreciate it.

Katie: 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 "7 Simple Steps for Healthier Families" guide for free, head on over to wellnessmama.com and enter your email and I'll send it over to you right away.

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