



Episode 389: Addressing the Root Cause of
Eczema, Allergies and Asthma
With Dr Nelli Gluzman

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

Today's episode is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals. They are on a mission to reinvent your medicine cabinet with clean remedies that actually work. And they create these clean science-backed remedies to support your health daily using the best bee products available, like their B. Soothed Cough Syrup, which is a truly clean cough syrup that helps you to get back on your feet faster. And I will say my childhood experience with cough syrup was less than ideal. Whatever I was given as a kid, when I was sick, tasted horrible. My mom had to fight me to take it and, looking back, there probably were some things in it, I didn't want to take anyway and wouldn't wanna give my kids now, which is why I'm so excited about options like B. Soothed Cough Syrup. It is not just delicious, but incredibly beneficial for the body in various ways. And it really works quickly. We take it at first sign of being under the weather or for throat support whenever we need it. The flavor, like I said, is delicious. My kids feel like they're actually getting a treat versus having to take something they don't want to take.

And it's naturally powered by nature's most powerful immune supporters, like pure buckwheat honey, elderberry, which I've talked about in-depth on my blog, chaga mushrooms, which is the king of mushrooms, bee propolis, which, if you're not familiar is a fascinating compound. It's what bees use to keep their hives safe, and it's incredibly beneficial and olive leaf extract. Unlike a lot of other products, it doesn't have any drugs, or dyes, or dirty chemicals, or refined sugars. And like I said, it tastes great. There's not that weird kind of chemical taste that we grew up with and have when we were a kid. It has a very mild berry flavor with the gentleness of the honey. And so, like I said, we take this at the first sign of a tickle in the throat or I use a lot of Beekeeper products anytime I'm traveling or potentially exposed to something, just as a little extra boost. So if you're ready to upgrade your medicine cabinet, this cough syrup always sells out really quickly. I have a feeling that's going to be even more so the case this year. So check out Beekeeper's Naturals and try their B. Soothed Cough Syrup. Also check out their other remedies while you are there. You save 15% on your first order by going to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama and meet your new medicine cabinet with Beekeeper's Naturals.

This episode is sponsored by Hiya chewable kids vitamins. It's a new company I found that my kids are extremely excited about. Do you know that most typical children's vitamins are essentially just candy in disguise? Many have as much as two teaspoons of sugar, along with some food dyes, some other unhealthy chemicals, or gummy junk that kids should probably never eat as a dentist would probably agree with. Hiya is the complete opposite. It fills the most common gaps in children's diets with full-body nourishment and a yummy taste they love without any of that junk. While most children's vitamins might contain as much as 5 grams of sugar, it can cause a variety of health issues. Hiya has created a zero sugar, zero gummy, junk-free vitamin that tastes great, and as my kids will attest, is delicious. It's perfect even for picky eaters. Also importantly, it's manufactured in the U.S. with globally sourced ingredients, each selected and screened for optimal bioavailability and absorption. What's cool is they send us to your door on the pediatrician recommended schedule. And the first month, you get a reusable glass bottle, that you can personalize with stickers. So every month thereafter, they send a no plastic refill pouch, which means it isn't just good for your kids, it's also good for the environment, and it reduces waste. My kids love the little glass jar that the vitamins

are in and I love how it's low waste. You can find out all about them, and their sourcing, and the many benefits by going to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama.

Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's wellness with an E on the end, my new line of personal care products that are safe and natural for the whole family. Speaking of the family, I am here with Dr. Nelli Gluzman, who is the founder and head physician at Blossom Pediatrics, which is a pediatric practice dedicated to helping families address the root cause of common childhood illnesses and problems. And this passion for Dr. Nelli was born out of her own transformational healing for her own daughter. And she basically turned her daughter's health around using a custom blend of functional and integrative medicine that addresses the root cause approach. And she specifically helps with childhood conditions like asthma, eczema, and allergies. And I get so many questions about these particular topics which seemed to be on the rise right now really drastically, that I wanted to have her on to talk these through. And we address a lot of the common factors that can go into this along with some of the common approaches to finding healing, as well as some more specific in each ones, and talk about some of the things, especially this year that are probably contributing to the rise in certain conditions, especially eczema. So a lot of practical information and starting points in this episode. And then I have some links in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm that you guys can continue to learn in case any of your children have any of these conditions. So without further ado, let's join Dr. Nelli. Dr. Nelli, welcome. Thank you for being here.

Dr. Nelli: Thank you so much, Katie, for having me.

Katie: I'm very excited to chat with you because the work that you do is so helpful I think to a lot of parents on some topics that I get recurring questions about and I'm sure you do too, since this is your area of expertise. And, that's things like eczema, asthma, and allergies, which seem to be on the rise, especially in the pediatric age groups right now. Is that what you're seeing as well?

Dr. Nelli: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I mean this is, I would dare to say that, unfortunately, the rise of childhood asthma, allergies, and eczema is an epidemic of chronic childhood illness and the numbers are just flying. They're rising really quickly and so this is why I made it my life's mission to help parents just like I was, help reverse their child's asthma, eczema, and allergies.

Katie: Yeah, I've definitely seen that. My son had eczema, I've written about this before, when he was younger. And I feel like these have become so common that a lot of the parents kind of accept them almost as par for the course. Or, are only given options sort of to kind of manage and mitigate these things versus actually try to address them from a root cause perspective. So I want to go deep on all of these topics and really delve into some of the specifics. But to start off, let's start broad and can you kind of walk us through. Like, it's easy to think of these as separate things and I know they're kind of treated separately in a lot of conventional medical models. But also from my research, there's some common threads that are woven through them so can you start broad and kind of explain to us what's going on in the body when a child has one of these conditions?

Dr. Nelli: Yes, there are a few different ways to look at why asthma, eczema, and allergies they...some specialties and some conventional medicine world, which I'm also part of because I am a conventional pediatrician. We look at this as kind of like each individual problem is separate but we do acknowledge that there is something called atopic triad and having one increases your risk for having the others. Now, when you look, go to different specialists, and let's say you have a kid, like you parents will have a kid who's wheezing all the time and maybe or maybe they haven't been diagnosed yet with asthma. And, they're wheezing, they need to take Albuterol to breathe, sometimes they're put on steroids.

And so you go to the best pulmonologist or lung doctor and they prescribe medication that helps mitigate some of the inflammation either on the spot, opens up the airways, basically treats the problem while it's happening or tries to decrease the inflammation in the lungs. Now, you parents who have a child who may have some rashes periodically or maybe way too often. And, sometimes they're diagnosed with atopic dermatitis, another name for that is eczema. And, the number of kids who are diagnosed with this is just skyrocketing.

And, so I'm sure a lot of you parents out there listening, you could relate. That if you go to the best pulmonologist or your regular pediatrician they might prescribe a really good medication, a topical steroid that you put on the skin to help calm the inflammation there. Or parents who have kids with allergies, you might go to the best allergist and they might prescribe to you a few things and one of them being avoid the trigger and maybe walk around with an EpiPen just to make sure that if there is an allergic reaction that it's not so severe that it could be very dangerous and harmful. All of those treatments are lifesaving and extremely helpful. They will definitely work. These conventional treatments will get rid of the symptom on the spot. But the common thread of all these chronic childhood illnesses is that they're coming from the same place and that's where holistic medicine comes in. That the root cause of so many of these inflammatory conditions, especially in children is coming from one place or maybe several places but it usually stems from gut health and a lot of toxicity in the body.

Katie: Gotcha. So why do you think we're seeing, like you said, this is such a drastic rise right now, kind of unprecedented. We've never seen this really in history for childhood illness and chronic conditions to be on the rise so much. Why do you think...I'm sure it's multifaceted. It's not a single factor but what do you think are some of the reasons that we're seeing such a drastic change right now?

Dr. Nelli: This is such a great question, Katie. Because I wanted to point out some numbers for you that when I read, I was blown away. The number of kids who have a diagnosis of eczema right now is about 12.6% in the U.S., percent. The number of children who have food allergies, true food allergies, is about 7.6% in the U.S. That number is way too high. The number of children who have let's say childhood peanut or tree nut allergies are tripling and they're tripled between 1997 and 2008. That's about one child in every 13 children has severe allergies.

Now, when you were in like younger, do you remember in your childhood, having kids in your classroom or friends or family members who had to walk around with an EpiPen or had severe anaphylactic reactions because I don't. So we can't really look past the fact that the numbers are really, really skyrocketing and doubling or tripling over 10 to 15 years. Now, in the conventional medicine world versus like a holistic approach, in the conventional medicine world, there is this notion that a lot of these chronic childhood illnesses are caused by genetics. But genetics does not account for the doubling and tripling of these illnesses over the past decade or so.

So that's one way to look at it. Like there is a genetic component but we also have to take into account epigenetics. Meaning, the environment is influencing the way that our genetics are expressed. So I mean we know there have been thousands upon thousands of studies that show that the environment is responsible for how genetics can play out. Really, genetics has nothing on epigenetics when it comes to chronic childhood illnesses and so that's the world of holistic, a more holistic root cause approach where we try to mitigate genetics by influencing the environment, both, inside a child's body and outside their body.

Katie: That makes sense. And, so it sounds like there's very much, like you mentioned, a common inflammation thread here, and like you said, there's a lot of things that contribute to this. And I know, for me, I don't have eczema or allergies. I had autoimmune disease for a lot of years and I've used this analogy before. But the way I used to think of it was, you know like we all have kind of a bathtub. You could put any number of things in the bathtub. It could be like sand, or rocks, or water, kids toys, whatever it is. But eventually, when you've reached the top of it, the bathtub is going to overflow no matter what you put in it. So when we're thinking of kids and chronic issues like this it's like they might have toxicity from certain things. They might have inflammation from other things. They might have genetic predispositions like you mentioned. It could be any number of factors and probably is different in some ways for every single child. But when it reaches that threshold it's going to start expressing in problems and those problems could look different for every single child but there are these kind of common threads that like you just explained that are woven through. So I'm curious, the last couple of years for me have really driven home the point just how personalized health is and I know you work individually with your patients in figuring out those things but walk us through that. When someone comes in with one of these chronic conditions, how do you start to kind of peel back those layers and figure out what the underlying factors are?

Dr. Nelli: Katie, I love the example you gave and I use it all the time. That anybody in a child's body is like a basin. And, so when we don't have an ability to take out the things in the body that shouldn't be there and there's too much accumulating, we start to have an overflow of toxicity for example, or inflammation. And, those can manifest not just as eczema, allergies, or asthma but a lot of soft signs. So I have a personal, it came from a personal place.

My daughter, when she was about three-years-old and I was already a well-trained pediatrician. I was working with the sickest hospitalized kids. I knew how to make them better and go home with their families but I had no idea how to keep my own daughter healthy. As she had a lot of these soft signs where whether that be the beginnings of autoimmune disease, or rashes, frequent ear infections, frequent...every little virus would turn

into a bacterial infection. So I'm no stranger, as a mom, to having a kid who's had a lot of problems and that's where I started to heal her. I looked beyond conventional medicine to heal my own child.

And, so after figuring out the big difference between what it means to have an approach that just looked at symptom management, which is excellent and lifesavings. But also looking at the root cause and healing, I had to start helping other families, too. And, this approach is not new but it's not something that we can ignore anymore because so many of our children are having these issues. So how I bring, how I've brought kids out of having a lot of hospitalizations for asthma, I've been weening a lot of my families from needing to carry an EpiPen. A lot of allergies can be literally reversed by healing the body and giving a child's body what it needs to heal. So the approach very broadly is three things, okay?

The first is to give the child's body what it needs to heal. And, usually, what needs most healing in our modern Western world is gut health. This is the foundation of our health in general, and this is where a lot of our immune system is developed. About 77% of our immune system is matured and kind of taught in the gut. Because of the way of all the toxins in our environment, maybe because of the different kinds of exposures that our children have, many, many different reasons, gut health is very commonly compromised when it comes to kids who have asthma, allergies, and eczema. And, so first thing we do is reverse issues with gut health by giving a child's body what it needs to heal, healing and sealing the gut lining.

Another, a second approach that I take with kids when I want to reverse asthma, eczema, and allergies, is to restore the microbiome so it could be diverse and healthy and support the integrity of the gut lining. And the, third approach as we probably all know now is to minimize the toxicity in our child's body by making good choices when it comes to exposures that we can control but also supporting a child's body in detoxing internally.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so to get a little bit more specific on that, when it comes to reducing inflammation and avoiding some of those toxicities, what are some of the common areas that you see those that parents can start paying attention to and know to avoid?

Dr. Nelli: Yeah, that's a great place to start. Usually, when I bring families through my programs we start with toxicity because that's kind of the easiest to mitigate and we can start to make the changes right away. The places I see most trouble is families don't really know what they're exposing their children to and themselves to, as a family. And, so a good place to start is, even with a newborn, you want to make sure that the products that we use are nontoxic.

So I know, Katie, you have a line that's incredible that's nontoxic and you put so much attention into making sure that the products that you're using are not going to do any harm. In holistic pediatrics, which is what I practice, I want to make sure that the families know the same. You know, I even see babies just born whose parents are using a lot of like skincare products whether on the baby or on themselves not knowing that a lot of the toxic chemicals are getting absorbed through the skin. I think a lot of us at this point know that we

should avoid food toxins as much as we can in the form of preservatives, or additives, colorings, antibiotics in foods. This is not new news but there's so many environmental toxins that we bring into our household every day that don't have to be this way.

And, so we start with making sure that whatever is coming into our household, or touching, or the grass that our children are running on is not full of toxins that they will be exposed to. Another interesting point that is children are so much more susceptible to toxicity than adults. If you think about it, right now, right, the West Coast is having a lot of fires, unfortunately. And, a lot of children and adults are exposed to air quality issues in air pollution on the West that's even coming to the East, where I am.

And, so children because they are breathing so much more per minute than an adult at rest, they're breathing a lot more of the toxins. The same applies to children who are let's say running around on a lawn that has been sprayed by glyphosate around them. Usually, you don't have adults running around on that grass. You have children who are running around the grass and so they're exposed a lot more. Another reason why kids are so much more vulnerable to toxicity in the environment is because they're not fully matured yet and so the impact of the toxins is a lot greater for kids who are still developing. And they have a whole life in front of them so the impact will be even greater as they get older. So we have to be extra careful when we think about toxic exposure in our children because we don't know a lot and there's so much that we can do to remedy the problem.

Katie: That makes sense. Do you find that often are there like food triggers often with this as well, as well as environmental. If so how do you typically get parents to start trying to figure out what those food triggers are?

Dr. Nelli: Yeah, this is one of the most, when I speak to families and I take them through this healing journey, this is one of the most complicated questions because no two people are alike. So food triggers and whether they be true allergies or just sensitivities, they are different for every person. I think we could all agree that a lot of kids are very sensitive to things that are not considered food. Like processed sugars or colorings, or additives, preservatives, those are not good for anybody. A lot of kids are very sensitive to that. I have a lot of children in my practice who literally become more hyperactive and have worse days in school when they're exposed to different food colorings.

Now, these kind of colorings are very prevalent in children's products and if you're not looking out for them, then you might not know that they're influencing your child. Now, we also know that there's a lot of controversy when it comes to certain foods. For example, gluten. Some people say it's very not great for us. Other people say it's okay. Everyone is different. The most important part of when we're making choices for our children is to really look at your child and see how they're reacting to something and, even for yourselves.

The goal of my programs is actually not to have any avoidances. That's what we want ultimately for our children. That they're able to go to school without having fear that they're going to have an anaphylactic reactions. Or, go to birthday parties and be able to eat that cupcake and not need to ask about what's in it.

The goal is for our children to be able to be exposed to anything they want and for their bodies to be resilient enough to be able to handle that without having a severe inflammatory reaction.

Katie: That makes sense. Yeah, definitely, that sounds optimal that they wouldn't have to avoid things in the long-term. Do you find it's hard that kids to be compliant with this or do you have any tips for parents with that? I just think back to my son, when he was little. He had severe eczema on his face and we did a modified version of the gaps protocol for like a year and it absolutely worked. But I also know that was, it was a pretty intensive thing and it did take a while to get him on board with complying with that. Do you have any tips for parents for navigating that?

Dr. Nelli: Yeah, Katie, you know you mentioned gaps protocol. I'm actually one of the...I believe I'm the only pediatrician in New York and surrounding area that's trained in the gaps protocol and I use it all the time but it's very hard. And, so compliance is an issue and, usually, in my practice, I found that for some families you need to kind of moderate that. Like, you can't just ask a family who's never really been cooking or spent much time in the kitchen, to implement some of the changes that might be beneficial to kids who are having these problems so we make small changes. And some families who are really comfortable in the kitchen can make bigger changes where it's not going to affect them so much so it's really custom-tailored.

But the big point is that healing your child and rescuing your child's health and reversing things like what you did, Katie. Which was reverse your child's eczema is doable for everybody, whether you are great in the kitchen, want to spend a lot of time cooking or not. I use a lot of what is in the gaps protocol in my patients and when I take my families through these programs to heal. I do strongly believe that the foundation of a lot of these issues is a strong, healthy, and diverse microbiome. And, also having a really well-healed sealed gut lining and that's really a lot of gaps protocol.

So we use things like bone broth, or meat stocks, or fish stocks. And, if you're vegan, we can even use different kinds of fats to literally heal and seal the gut lining. And, we use a lot of different ferments to make sure that children are getting the most potent natural forms of probiotics right into their gut. A lot of kids don't love ferments. And, a lot of kids don't love stocks and broths, including my own kid. I've been there. I've been that parent where I was like, "Okay, drink that bone broth," but it doesn't work that way.

So one of the tips I have for parents when you're introducing something that's new to your child and they're kind of very resistant. Is, offer it to them and do it often. So some studies that I look at show that a lot of kids need to be offered something, depending on their age, about seven times before they're able to kind of receive it and their tastebuds are open to receiving it as something that they like. Even if it's something that they don't like, I found in my practice, when you keep offering it to kids, they eventually give in and like it.

Another tip I have for parents when you're trying to introduce something for picky eaters that they're not necessarily interested in is to have your child watch you eat it. That makes a really big difference. Or, have

your kid make it with you if they're a little bit older because engaged kids tend to want to eat their own food. That helped my kid tremendously and it helps a lot of families that I know as well.

Now, you could get a little bit sneaky if those things don't work. For example, with things like broths and stocks, I tend to have kids accept it more willingly if they're offered that as a drink instead of water in the middle of the day because they're kind of thirsty. So maybe offer for them to drink that like maybe in a cup. Maybe a cup that they like if they're really young and they're into that. A few sips, and then you offer them water.

With things like ferments, it's interesting because a lot of adults are like, I don't know. Sauerkraut is kind of weird. And I use a lot of different ferments in my protocols like beet kvass and fermented ginger. You could really ferment anything. And then so I actually recommend families start off really slow for a number of reasons. One of them is for the tastebuds to get used to these flavors. I would say putting fermented juice like sauerkraut juice instead of salt on your meals is a really great place to start. And I use ferments a lot at least in my protocols. They're a staple of healing the gut and, thereby, reversing a lot of these chronic childhood eczema, asthma, and allergies. And, so I always say a fermented day keeps the doctor away and I stand by that.

Katie: That's a good rule of thumb, yeah. We definitely use ferments during our time on gaps as well and bone broth is still a staple in our kitchen. I know right now especially I'm getting a whole lot of questions on my post about eczema. So to get really specific on that, I'm curious if there are common triggers. I know like you've said so well, it's very individualized and there can be so many different factors but when it comes to eczema, specifically, are there common triggers or like starting points that occur more often that you get parents to start with when trying to address it?

Dr. Nelli: So a common trigger is usually food but I'm also seeing a lot of babies who are just a few months old, having severe eczema. It's not that I wanted to, it's not that I chose to specialize in eczema, on allergies, and asthma. It's just that almost everybody is coming in with this problem. It's rising rapidly and a lot times, they're food triggers but it's not that we're supposed to stay away from the food. We have to ask ourselves, why are all these foods that are normal healthy foods, triggering our kids' immune systems to react in a such massive way? Why is it coming out on the skin like this? It's not a condition of the skin, eczema. It's a condition of inflammation, so how do we get to this point? This is what root cause medicine is all about.

Yes, we can use steroids as Band-Aid solution to cover up the symptoms of eczema. Yes, of course, we can use these steroids to calm the inflammation so our kids can sleep at night and not itch all night and be miserable and have broken skin. Yes, we can use conventional medicine but we have to look at the root cause. I believe that a lot of these food triggers that are causing eczema are caused by a leaky gut. So looking at root cause medicine, it's the leaky gut that's the big problem when it comes to eczema flares.

A lot of kids, yes, are very sensitive to different kinds of chemicals in the environment. So it could be just as simple as switching your detergent or not using certain kinds of creams or lotions. But, in order to reverse eczema permanently like you did, Katie, with your child, we need to heal the gut, first. I believe that there's such a big problem with gut health that it's manifesting in this way for a lot of kids but it could also be a lot different soft signs.

So sometimes, you parents, if you have a kid who's having a lot of gut issues. Let's say they're constipated all the time, or have really watery stools, or getting bloated all the time. Those are soft signs for a bigger underlying problem. Or, you parents, if you have a child who's having a lot of ear infections over and over again or having kind of environmental allergies. All those are soft signs for gut dysbiosis and a leaky gut. The good news is that these things are reversible and there's so many things that we can do now to start reversing these chronic childhood illnesses.

Katie: That makes sense. And, I know you mentioned like steroids are often used for temporary relief for this. For parents not wanting to use steroids even in the short-term, are there any other relief measures for kids that parents could turn to that are maybe more natural?

Dr. Nelli: So, yes. I love...you know I know we're all busy parents. I'm a busy parent and we just are a busy family. I think a lot of families listening right now can relate. We don't have a lot of time to implement a lot of things, especially when they're not that effective. So one approach to getting rid of eczema is to use steroid creams or other creams that will calm the inflammation. This is not a solution that is something that will work in the long-term. A lot of kids come back with stronger and worse inflammation and this is because without treating the root cause, we're not helping. However, I love things that work in our busy daily lives.

A lot of kids are taking baths and, Katie, I think that you a long time ago posted an article about detox baths and that's when I started to get the idea. We want to put things into our daily habits that work with what we're already doing so that it's not such a great impact. A lot of kids are taking baths and a lot of different products that we could put in a bath that are natural and holistic, like Epsom salt or dead sea salt. Not only help to detox our child's bodies but also calm a lot of the eczema flares that might be on the rise or happening.

Katie: Makes sense. And, to go back to the bathtub analogy. I notice like a lot of moms and this is certainly my case as well, also have some underlying whether it'd be chronic issues. Like, I had autoimmune disease. Or, just fatigue or different health struggles that tend to maybe get a little bit worse after pregnancy or in the early stages of motherhood when you're so tired. And, so the beauty of taking the root cause approach like this is it can benefit the whole family and actually have some crossover effect into parents as well, and into their energy levels. Do you have any, like I love to ask this kind of 80/20 tips that are beneficial for the whole family, especially like maybe the families you mention that if they're not already just cooking from scratch and some of this is really new to them. Kind of good starting points that tend to be big needle movers that families can start with all together?

Dr. Nelli: Yeah, that's a great question. So the good news about working with children and, thereby, families is that all the solutions that are used have to be not only evidence-based. Meaning, that they work and they're safe for children but also, they're very gentle. And, so all the solutions that we have for children also work for adults. I found that a lot of families who's kids are struggling with these issues, they're focusing on the child and they're ready to do anything to help their child. And then, the kind of mom's, dad's health, maybe older siblings end up being on the back burner. But it's pretty amazing. Once the whole family gets into it, the whole family heals.

And so, yes, I am a pediatrician and I kind of only work on focusing on the children but the whole family could really go through these processes and heal. A good place to start...the best place to start and I love this place is, to start adding fermented foods into every day life. So it's actually if you're into it, it's really fun to make. A great place to start is to make your own sauerkraut but that's not even absolutely necessary. You can get really great sauerkraut in a lot of places that is alive like from your local farmer's market.

But I love this because all you need is two ingredients. It's cabbage and salt. And cabbage is really easy to get in a lot of places. Local, organic, and seasonal and it's also very inexpensive. And, if you make it as a family, it's really, it's kind of simple. It's the simplest ferment to make. You don't need any starter cultures. You make a big batch and it could last you such a long time. And, having even we start slow and even having like a shot of sauerkraut a day or sauerkraut juice, or having like one bite per meal as a family makes a big difference when it comes to reversing a lot of these issues. This is one of the staples of healing the gut, is to make sure that we have a good variety of a diverse and healthy microbiome.

Katie: Yeah, I'm convinced more and more just how important that microbiome is for overall health, certainly for these issues. But I feel like I have yet to find any condition that does not in some way go back to the gut or that somehow get better by giving the body that immune boost of fixing the gut.

Dr. Nelli: It's true that the kids who are...I have one patient, one boy. He is now three-years-old. And, when he was one and a half, I started him on the protocol. He had a bunch of issues not just really severe food allergies but eczema flares, he couldn't eat anything. This started before he was even on solid foods. He was sensitive to all of his mom's food intake. He was breast-fed and she had to get really restrictive about what she was eating. And then, he developed other issues like poor sleep and ADHD, and constipation, and bloating.

And, so when they came to me, he was on all these different medications just to control the symptoms. He was on an inhaler, he was on two different steroid creams, he was needing Miralax to poop. He needed a lot of different medications just to get through the day. So by healing his gut lining and restoring the microbiome and detoxing his body, we were able to eliminate most of his food allergies where and he hasn't had any flares since, really. A lot of kids respond really quickly to these kinds of gut healing protocol. It's also safe to do. And, whether or not your child is having severe issues or just mild soft signs and you feel like something's off or maybe just having a lot of gut health issues. These protocols are fundamental for all of your child's life processes. You need your gut to be healthy in order for everything else to work.

Katie: Absolutely. And I'm so glad you mentioned the behavior component as well, like with ADD and ADHD. I think this is obviously another area. It's no secret that this is on the rise and there's been so much debate. Is it because we're testing and identifying more? Is it because there's medication available so it's more common to be able to try to address it now through medication. But whatever the reason, it's well-documented that behavioral challenges like those, ADD and ADHD and sensory processing, those are all on the rise as well. And I know at least, from my first-hand experience, there is an absolute link here, with the behavior and gut component. And I know that like research has said the gut is kind of like the second brain. Now, there's actually research saying maybe the gut is actually like the first-brain. Like the more they find out about like everything that goes on in the gut, they think it's actually even more important potentially than we thought.

But that's another part I don't feel like we talk too much about. Yet, that is very much related here and I'd love to hear your clinical experience. It's just like you said, there is such a behavioral component to gut health. So often, at least, from my experience, we started addressing these things from an eczema standpoint and then saw drastic changes on the behavioral side as well. Is that what you see with your patients as well?

Dr. Nelli: Absolutely. And I have some staggering numbers. And, when I read them last, this is from the CDC, I was really shocked and scared. I saw I mean 9.4% of children in the U.S. are diagnosed with ADHD, 7.4% of children are diagnosed with anxiety. This is kids under 18. Depression is on the rise, too. 3.2% of kids under 17 are diagnosed with depression in their lifetimes. So that means that one in six kids between the ages of two to eight have been diagnosed already with some kind of mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder. This is not okay.

So while we want to seek conventional treatments, we also want to make sure that we literally heal our kids' bodies. A lot of times when kids come in with these inflammatory issues like asthma, eczema, and allergies, they do already come in with medications for depression and anxiety and ADHD very often. The goal is not a lifetime of medications. The goal is to give our kids the building blocks they need for their bodies to heal. For their basins to be able to drain as we said earlier. For them to live a thriving healthy life so, yes, I see this a lot. It's a real epidemic. It's a real problem. It's very much reversible and the numbers of kids who are just overall, even if there's no diagnosis, are sleeping better, getting better grades, able to focus better. Making more friends when they're not focused on their illness, number one. And, number two, when their gut is working properly. Why is that?

Well, if your gut is not healthy, you're not able to get all the nutrients and absorb all the nutrients that a child needs to grow properly. When a gut is not healthy they're not able, kids are not able to eliminate a lot of the toxins in their bodies that are naturally produced but maybe also they're exposed to a lot. And, so we need the gut to work properly in order for everything else to work, including their mental and emotional states.

Katie: Yeah, for sure. And, to highlight what you said as well. I think it's also really important, especially if you're in the acute phase of this, to remember it's not lifelong. And like you said, the goal should be not having

to be restricted long-term and to get to a point of healing and of lowering inflammation such that these things are avoided for the long-term because you actually addressed the root cause. And, I just want to make sure we offer that encouragement because I know having been through this with my son and also in my own autoimmune journey. It seems overwhelming when you're staring the face of something you think you're going to have to do forever or for an extremely long amount of time. And, so I just wanted to make sure we talked about that because I've now reached a point, as has my son, where we don't have any dietary triggers that we have to avoid other than, I still don't do well with eggs. But of all the things that triggered me in the beginning, that's the only one that I still loosely avoid. It's not horrible if I eat it. It's just I know I feel a little better if I don't. But just to make sure we call out that encouragement that this is often a commitment but not a lifelong one.

Dr. Nelli: Yes. Yeah, absolutely, Katie. And I'm glad that everything is so much better for you. And, for all you parents who are struggling right now with kids who are having eczema, asthma, allergies, whatever it may be. A kid who's constantly sick, I've been there. I'm sending lots of love to you. And, I want you to know that these are reversible. And it might take maybe 30 days to start seeing changes. Or it might take a few months. Or, maybe, it'll take a few years. But I could assure you that if you give a child's body, their amazing body what it needs to heal and support their ability to detox and literally heal their gut lining.

And, I mean though you can reverse your child's chronic illnesses, and this is available for anybody so you don't need to spend a lot of money. This is usually just done with plain ole food as medicine. And, children are so resilient and they turn around. And, they're incredible because they can heal so much faster than adults can. And, this is why I encourage you. If you're not feeling right about the way that your child's health is going, I really encourage you to look beyond conventional medicine. And, look at a holistic root cause approach and think about you know is the solution that you're offered by whichever practitioner, does it just address the symptom? Or does it also address the root cause of the issue? This is what I teach a lot of my medical students and residents as well. And, just asking yourself that question will really start to open up a lot of empowering choices for you.

Katie: Yeah, and like you said, kids especially respond so quickly to this. Like, I know, he, my son started responding like you said, even within that first month it was a drastic difference. And, for that time that we were on it, it was like there's a lot of things we were avoiding. But, now, he's able to handle pretty much all foods without any issue.

Today's episode is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals. They are on a mission to reinvent your medicine cabinet with clean remedies that actually work. And they create these clean science-backed remedies to support your health daily using the best bee products available, like their B. Soothed Cough Syrup, which is a truly clean cough syrup that helps you to get back on your feet faster. And I will say my childhood experience with cough syrup was less than ideal. Whatever I was given as a kid, when I was sick, tasted horrible. My mom had to fight me to take it and, looking back, there probably were some things in it, I didn't want to take anyway and wouldn't wanna give my kids now, which is why I'm so excited about options like B. Soothed Cough Syrup. It is not just delicious, but incredibly beneficial for the body in various ways. And it really works quickly. We take it at first sign of being under the weather or for throat support whenever we need it. The

flavor, like I said, is delicious. My kids feel like they're actually getting a treat versus having to take something they don't want to take.

And it's naturally powered by nature's most powerful immune supporters, like pure buckwheat honey, elderberry, which I've talked about in-depth on my blog, chaga mushrooms, which is the king of mushrooms, bee propolis, which, if you're not familiar is a fascinating compound. It's what bees use to keep their hives safe, and it's incredibly beneficial and olive leaf extract. Unlike a lot of other products, it doesn't have any drugs, or dyes, or dirty chemicals, or refined sugars. And like I said, it tastes great. There's not that weird kind of chemical taste that we grew up with and have when we were a kid. It has a very mild berry flavor with the gentleness of the honey. And so, like I said, we take this at the first sign of a tickle in the throat or I use a lot of Beekeeper products anytime I'm traveling or potentially exposed to something, just as a little extra boost. So if you're ready to upgrade your medicine cabinet, this cough syrup always sells out really quickly. I have a feeling that's going to be even more so the case this year. So check out Beekeeper's Naturals and try their B. Soothed Cough Syrup. Also check out their other remedies while you are there. You save 15% on your first order by going to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama and meet your new medicine cabinet with Beekeeper's Naturals.

This episode is sponsored by Hiya chewable kids vitamins. It's a new company I found that my kids are extremely excited about. Do you know that most typical children's vitamins are essentially just candy in disguise? Many have as much as two teaspoons of sugar, along with some food dyes, some other unhealthy chemicals, or gummy junk that kids should probably never eat as a dentist would probably agree with. Hiya is the complete opposite. It fills the most common gaps in children's diets with full-body nourishment and a yummy taste they love without any of that junk. While most children's vitamins might contain as much as 5 grams of sugar, it can cause a variety of health issues. Hiya has created a zero sugar, zero gummy, junk-free vitamin that tastes great, and as my kids will attest, is delicious. It's perfect even for picky eaters. Also importantly, it's manufactured in the U.S. with globally sourced ingredients, each selected and screened for optimal bioavailability and absorption. What's cool is they send us to your door on the pediatrician recommended schedule. And the first month, you get a reusable glass bottle, that you can personalize with stickers. So every month thereafter, they send a no plastic refill pouch, which means it isn't just good for your kids, it's also good for the environment, and it reduces waste. My kids love the little glass jar that the vitamins are in and I love how it's low waste. You can find out all about them, and their sourcing, and the many benefits by going to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama.

For him, I'm curious, I know you mentioned it a little bit but like some of those common triggers that are great to start avoiding, we found like for a short time, we were avoiding gluten, dairy, nightshades, eggs, and a couple other things. Are those kind of the common foods that you see recurring and are there others that you advise in that short-term phase as well?

Dr. Nelli: So when we start to heal, we take away a lot of the foods that are not foods, first of all. We all know that. But I do recommend taking out gluten and dairy, initially. With the hopes that once we calm the

inflammation, we heal. Then these foods won't be a problem anymore if they're used sparingly. Now, what that means is an elimination type kind of diet in the beginning. It's not so hard for kids to get used to it to be honest. Why gluten and dairy?

You know this is very controversial and, again, everyone is different. But there are so many kids who are very sensitive to gluten, and adults, who are sensitive to gluten that it's worth just taking out because there could be a lot of underlying issue when it comes to gluten. Why gluten? Gluten is not the same gluten that we had about 50 years ago. It's very highly processed grain.

We also take our dairy because, initially, when we think about dairy. It's actually really hard to get the kinds of dairy that is helpful to us, to our bodies. So it might be an organic dairy but it's also very highly processed and causes a lot of inflammation for a lot of kids. So in the beginning stages, I do take out gluten and dairy because of just the sheer numbers of kids who are so sensitive to these foods. We heal. And then, we start to introduce them back in, slowly.

Now, with the nightshades, the nightshades are very much individual. We usually don't start with those. But when I work with families one-on-one, I'm able to pinpoint exact root problem that is going on in their guts by using a lot great functional medicine tests that look at the inner workings of the gut, give us a really great picture of what should we be using, when it comes to herbs and botanicals to restore gut health then and there.

Katie: Got it. Okay. That is really helpful. I've been taking notes as well, so I can make sure I put everything in the show notes. Do you follow the strict gaps protocol with some of your patients?

Dr. Nelli: It's not so simple. The gaps protocol, it works but it only works as well as a family is able to do it. So putting somebody on a really strict regiment when they're not ready to do it might as well not try it at all. And, so very often, I do kind of like a mix between it. A lot of what the gaps protocol teaches is to literally heal the gut and seal it. And, so for kids who are having kind of mild issues, we do a mild version of that where their lives are not going to be completely turned around when it comes to what the kids are eating. So small changes work.

We're not as restrictive when we put kids with mild problems through these programs. But with kids who are having severe issues and I mean so many children are having like constant hospitalizations, skin infections, wheezing all the time, allergic to everything, tons of gut health issues, a lot of behavioral problems. Even kids who are on the spectrum and they need their symptoms to kind of calm down for them to be able to thrive so much more. And, if the family is willing, I do take them through the protocol. It does take a lot of commitment but it is one of the most comprehensive effective ways to reverse chronic childhood illness that I have ever encountered in my entire medical career.

Katie: Amazing. That makes sense. Okay. Well, I've taken so many notes of resources and I know we have links to put in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm as well so people can continue to learn from you. You have a practice as well you mentioned, in New York. Could people come see you there, directly, if they're in the area?

Dr. Nelli: Yes. I have two ways that families can work with me. One-on-one at my practice in New York. It's called Blossom Pediatrics. And, the other way families could work with me is by going through my program remotely. The next program starts on November 15th. It's called, "Rescue Your Child's Health." And it's a 30-day program where I teach families the exact steps that they need to take in order to start reversing their child's chronic illnesses and healing their whole family. And, so if you go to blossompediatrics.com, you'll get all the info there. And, for you listeners, I'm offering 20% off the next program. And the code for that is wellness.

Katie: Perfect. We will put those links in the show notes as well, so people can find them. A somewhat unrelated question I like to ask at the end of episodes is if there's a book or a number of books that have really impacted your life? And if so, what they are and why?

Dr. Nelli: Oh, yeah, this is a great question. I always love it when you ask other people this question on the show. And, I've had so many amazing recommendations from this question so thank you for asking. The book that I would say had such a massive influence in my life as a parent and as a physician is called "The Dirt Cure." And, it's by a fellow holistic physician, Maya Shetreat. Dr. Maya Shetreat wrote it. It was one of the first steps that I took to start healing my child. I had no idea what the difference between root cause medicine meant until I read that book. It is so beautifully written and it's just so empowering. And it is so accurate and so fun to go through. I make my resident physician students read it as part of the curriculum and I offer it to a lot of families as well. So that's the book that had the most influence in my life and still does because it helped so many families that I know and love as well.

Katie: I'm so glad you brought that up. I have not read that book yet but I love that you mentioned dirt. Not to start on a whole new tangent but I think that's such an important aspect of the microbiome as well and one that I'm especially concerned about right now, with all the cleaning and sanitizing that's going on with concerns about viruses. Is, I worry about the skin microbiome and how much we are stripping our skin's natural bacteria. And, like I haven't read that book yet but I'm a huge proponent of interacting with nature and with dirt and with the microbial environment of the outside world. I feel like that's not talked about enough, especially right now when everyone's so concerned with getting rid of all germs. That we forget that there's a beneficial side to that as well. Just like we know with probiotics in the gut, there's also beneficial bacteria on the skin as well. Any tips before we wrap up just for parents in helping navigate that aspect to the microbiome?

Dr. Nelli: Yeah, I'm actually more worried about the impact of all the cleaning that we're doing, stripping all of the life of everything including the beneficial bacteria on the skin, in our bodies, what we're breathing. There is so much data. We know that having a non-diverse microbiome, meaning we're killing off everything, is extremely dangerous for all health. Nothing will function. Our microbes are responsible for the integrity of the

skin just as much as they're responsible for the integrity of the gut lining. So I worry about making sure that families know to mitigate all the cleaning that's happening. Meaning, that we need to now more than ever focus on microbiome health for our entire bodies. That does usually start with eating microbiome-rich foods but also exposures. Like going outside and playing in the dirt, and kissing your dog and cat. And, making sure that the foods that are eaten have dirt, real true dirt on them. That helps a lot, too.

Katie: Yeah. And the pet component, that was something fascinating I read and one of the reasons besides that I just love animals but that we have an indoor dog. Is, there's even really fascinating data about how interacting with a pet like you just said can help improve the microbiome and especially the skin microbiome. So I feel like a really fun easy way to, as long as you're not allergic, to get some microbial diversity as well.

Dr. Nelli: Yeah, it's a really controversial topic and I've been kind of...I have been only forward on it. But I think that the more that we expose our kids to, when it comes to nature in general, including our pets, the healthier they will be. And, there's so much evidence-based medicine and studies behind that, yes.

Katie: Cool. I feel like we touched on so many practical tips in this episode. Hopefully offered some hope to the many parents who are navigating this with their children. I love that you take the root cause approach. I think that's a perfect place to wrap as well. Is just remembering that the body's natural state is to be healthy and to heal. And that like that root cause is figuring out the things that are getting in the way of that. That we're not fighting the body. We're actually working with it to move back to it's natural state and sometimes it needs a little bit more help. But that when you address the root cause, it's not a lifelong restrictive process. It's actually a beautiful building journey that leads to better health for everyone in the family. And, it's so encouraging to find doctors and practitioners like you who are out there helping families navigate this from a root cause perspective. So I'm very grateful for you and the work that you do and for your time in being here today.

Dr. Nelli: Thank you so much, Katie. It was a blast.

Katie: And thank you, as always, to all of you for listening, for sharing your most valuable asset, your time, with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the Wellness Mama 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.