



Episode 421: Getting Rid of Eczema for Good  
With Dr. Ana-Maria Temple

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is sponsored by Four Sigmatic, the superfood mushroom company that I have been talking about and loving for many years! I love all of their products, especially their coffee infused with brain-boosting lion's mane and their reishi elixir at night for awesome sleep. I've also recently been trying their protein powder and really love their peanut butter flavor. Peanut Butter is one of my weaknesses, and I love that I get all the flavor of it in this protein packed format rather than the super-dense calorie version of regular peanut butter. Go to [foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama](https://foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama) and code `wellnessmama` gives 10% off.

This episode is brought to you by Wellnesse. That's Wellnesse with an E on the end. We make personal care products that go above and beyond just non-toxic to actually be beneficial for you from the outside in. I realized years ago that even some of my most naturally minded friends and family members who made an effort to eat organic food and be really cognizant of what they brought into their homes were still using certain personal care products, mainly hair care and oral care. And the reason was, they weren't willing to sacrifice how they looked and felt just to use natural products. And none of the natural products they were finding really lived up to the conventional products as far as how effective they were. So, I resolved to change this and realized I had things that I've been making in my kitchen for years that worked just as well and that I could share with other families, and thus Wellnesse was born. You've probably heard that what goes on our body gets into our body and that many of the chemicals we encounter end up in our bloodstream. To me, this means non-toxic and safe should be the absolute bare minimum baseline for any products that are in our lives. But I wanted to take it a step further. I wanted it to use this to our advantage to actually put beneficial ingredients in our hair care, toothpaste, personal care products so that we could benefit our body from the outside in. Why not use that wonderful skin barrier to our advantage? Our hair care is packed with ingredients like nettle, which helps hair get thicker over time. Our dry shampoo has scalp promoting products that really help follicles stay strong. And our toothpaste, for instance, has a naturally occurring mineral called hydroxyapatite, which is the exact formulation or exact mineral that's on our teeth that's present in strong enamel. So they're all designed to work with the body, not against it to help you have stronger, healthier hair and teeth. We now have a hand sanitizer that doesn't dry out your hands like many hand sanitizers do. I would be honored if you would check it out and I would love to hear your feedback. You can find all of our products at [wellnesse.com](https://wellnesse.com).

Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from [wellnessmama.com](https://wellnessmama.com) and [wellnesse.com](https://wellnesse.com). That's Wellnesse, with an E on the end, my new line of personal care products. This episode goes deep on eczema because I still get so many questions from other parents about this. My second son, my third child had eczema, very severe eczema, and we were able to reverse it. And we talk about some of the changes that helped him and also some of the changes that help many, many kids today.

I'm here with Dr. Ana-Maria Temple, who is a best-selling author and award-winning speaker at the Harvard Club of Boston. And she has a medical degree and works in functional medicine. And she's helped over 36,000

patients in-person and also via online courses and has a specific expertise when it comes to eczema. So we go really deep on this topic of how this process can start even before birth and during the birth process. What are some early interventions and then what to do even if a child has had eczema for a long time or has a very severe case? And there's some very specific resources for this in the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](http://wellnessmama.fm). If your child is struggling with eczema, I highly encourage you to check those out because I learned firsthand you can reverse it. And I know just how horrible it is to see your child suffer, so please take advantage of those resources, and I hope that you'll find this episode as helpful as I did. Without further ado, let's join Dr. Temple. Dr. Ana-Maria, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Dr. Ana-Maria: I'm so excited to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

Katie: I'm excited to chat with you because you are an expert in an area that I hear from a lot of parents about. And it seems to be I hear from an increasing number of parents and families about that, and that is eczema. And I know a lot of skin issues that, kind of, fall under that umbrella but I wanna really, like, start broad and really go deep and get into some specifics on this today because I had this with my second son, my third child, and we eventually were able to resolve it for him but I know it was a little bit of a long road. And I saw it firsthand just how uncomfortable he was. And it's heartbreaking as a parent to see your child go through that and, of course, horrible for the child as well. So, to start broad, walk us through what's going on physiologically in the body when someone has eczema.

Dr. Ana-Maria: Well, you know, we've had the same share...I mean, same issues at my household. And I was able to have two children that suffered from eczema because, you know, I'm an overachiever. And so I've gotten to see it firsthand as well. And what's going on in our body in the traditional model, you know, we're often taught about the skin, that the skin is the problem and we have to do topical treatments for it. When in fact, eczema actually starts from the inside out. And it usually starts with, you know, for our children with the mom's diet before she even was pregnant, during pregnancy, at birth. Once the children are born, and they're out in the world, and depending on the diet that they have right now, and what's going on is that the children's bodies are receiving different messages, and those messages are internalized, and often go right through the gut. And then depending on how the food is absorbed, it has to be sent to your skin cells. And if the signals are messed up, you end up with abnormal skin, which for many looks like eczema.

Katie: Got it. That makes sense. And I mean, I think we're seeing these even...I've seen young, young babies, even with eczema. So these are problems that can start really early on, right?

Dr. Ana-Maria: It is, like we were saying, it's an epidemic. The rates of eczema in 1970s were like 1 in 15, maybe 1 in 20. We're now seeing rates as 1 in 5. And in some nationalities, in some countries, it's 1 in 3. You know, it's not okay. And it's gotten...and it's being seen younger and younger these days.

Katie: Wow. Okay. Gotcha. So, let's start with what's the first step when someone comes to you? I know that you're a pediatrician as well. I'm sure you've seen many, many kids struggling with eczema. What is the first step when you have someone new come in?

Dr. Ana-Maria: When I first see them, I discuss really, kind of, things that we're talking about, the pathology of it, because most that you see in the media, and on social media, and out there in blog world is that it's a topical issue. And so we start with a mindset that we're gonna have to work from the inside out, and that there's not one more cream. You know, in 2017, I saw reports that people spent \$37.7 billion on topical treatments for eczema when compared to things for cancer and chemotherapy at \$48 billion. So eczema is almost costing us as much as chemotherapy, which is insane to me, which means the parents are searching continuously for what is the next topical lotion or potion that we can put. So our first discussion is like, you know what? The reason that the lotions and potions are not working is because we gotta start from the inside out and we need to look at your child's diet. And that usually is our first step and it's probably the hardest.

Katie: Yeah, especially with younger ones. I remember that from working with my son. What are some of the big dietary, kind of, red flags that you see, or triggers that seem to be relatively common? I know it's very individualized based on the gut but are there ones that are more common?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Oh, absolutely. Processed foods are number one and followed right closely behind by sugar. I have...One of my families, actually, I just saw him in clinic a couple of days ago and the dad was like, "I watched your video on eczema for kids and you talked about sugar. So I started looking at my diet and I decreased my sugar significantly before, you know, the pandemic." And he's like, "All my skin issues went away. And then this Christmas, I got really cavalier and so I did a free for all because it's Christmas," and he's like, "You know what happened? My eczema came back." And I'm excited when that happens, not because it happens because people can actually see the power of food.

So, processed foods are number one. And, you know, we've become a world of convenience foods. And it's easy and we're busy. And, you know, I have three kids, you have six kids, and probably folks who are listening have multiple children, and we have busy jobs and busy lives, and we're running in a million directions. So convenience foods have become the norm. And they're just so full of preservatives, and food coloring, and additives that a lot of times we don't even know what they mean. And really, everything has been now filled with sugar because sugar makes everything taste delicious. And, you know, in the 1980s, it was the low-fat trend. And everybody was like, "Oh, must do low-fat." Well, when they removed fat out of the products, well, they had to add sugar because if you take the fat and no sugar, it tastes like, well, bark or doo-doo, awful. And so they added all the sugar. So now our children are continuously blasted with processed foods and sugar.

So those are my number one and two. And fun fact, in my eczema course, I have parents that come in, they're like, "Listen, we've tried this diet, and we tried this other diet." And they've never decreased their processed foods or sugar. And those are the first steps they go through. They're like, "Oh my gosh, that made the world of difference," like, blown away by these two steps. And I would love to say they're simple, they're super hard.

Katie: Yeah, I feel like simple is not always easy. And someone I really admire is Naval Ravikant, he says, "Easy choices, hard life. Hard choices, easy life." It's like, you know, the things that really matter and that make the difference aren't always the easy ones but they're worthwhile. Do you see gluten and dairy or secondary ones like eggs and peanuts come as triggers pretty often?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Oh, yes. And then followed after the processed foods and sugar, then dairy is next in line, followed by gluten, eggs, and nuts, and actually in that order. Because we've seen them to become...They are in the top eight allergen foods. And there's a lot of literature to show that a lot of children respond very positively with resolving eczema when they remove those different foods.

Katie: And I'm curious, I know with my son it was not a lifelong intervention. We had to be really careful about that for a while we really helped intensively focus on his gut. And as he's gotten older and as he's had, like, really strong dietary habits since he was about 2, he's actually been able to now consume a lot of these things from really good sources, not processed sources, but he can consume certain types of dairy, no problem at all, things like that. Do you find that, like, if you really address the root causes, eventually, there is a chance kids can actually handle some of these foods?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Oh, absolutely. And I think probably that's a huge misconception in the holistic world is, like, "Well, let me remove..." So you know, I have a lot of my mamas that are, like, well-versed, well-researched and, like, you know, "I know about processed food. I know about sugar. I know about dairy, gluten." And they'll remove the different things but they don't do much to rebuild the gut because we gotta rebuild it. We gotta rebalance it, repopulate it. It's a whole lot of stuff that needs to be happening in order to not only cure eczema but, like you said, we gotta bring the foods back because the goal is not that we're gonna have our children be deprived of food for the rest of their lives so they don't keep their eczema coming back. The goal is we rebuild the gut so that children can be able to tolerate the various foods probably in different quantities, in different moderations, like you said, different quality of foods because not all food is created equal.

And then we want them to grow up just like everybody else, making smart choices for their body and seeing which foods fit with their, you know, systemic makeup compared to their friends. So the goal is to bring them back. And most of the time, except for the people that come in and they have anaphylaxis to foods. So if I have a youngster that has anaphylaxis to peanuts, that's gonna take a whole lot longer, it's a whole different ballgame, compared to the youngsters that we remove the foods we talked about and their eczema gets better, we rebuild the gut, repopulate and replenish it, and then we're able to bring the foods back. Much to everybody's astonishment, they're like, you know...Because we had these before, but we just do it differently on the backside.

Katie: I'm curious if there is a connection potentially with the gut bacteria thing to how babies are born as well. And I ask because my son who had eczema was my only C-section and it was placenta previa. So it was completely not avoidable. And I didn't know then what I know now about the gut bacteria transfer during the

birthing process. But I noticed that there seems like, at least people I know in my personal life, a stronger correlation of the potential for things like eczema with babies who are born during C-section or moms who had complications and ended up with a lot of antibiotics.

Dr. Ana-Maria: Oh, my gosh, and I think it starts even earlier. There's actually studies coming out of New Zealand, and I just saw a study coming on at Norway where they're specifically focusing on *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, which is a specific probiotic. And they give it to pregnant moms to see if there's a correlation with decreasing the children being able to have less eczema later on in life. And in a couple of studies with women that were about 500, over 500 pregnant women, they showed that using *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* compared to other probiotic strains was able to decrease the risk of the children developing eczema by 50%. So I think it become...It's even earlier than birth.

And then just like you said, I'm seeing a tremendous correlation between baby's born via C-section and eczema. Though interestingly, when we look in the literature, the studies don't really support that. They support that C-sections are correlated with food allergies, asthma, and other allergic issues, but not specifically eczema. However, I'm seeing a different story in my practice. And a fun fact is a new bacteria...it's not a new, it's actually an old bacteria. But in 1960s and before, our babies were all populated with *B. infantis*, this is bifidobacterium *infantis*, and all the babies had them in their guts. And scientists decided recently, like, "Let's look at the baby's guts and see what they're populated with." And, you know, when I was trained, it was like, "Oh, guts are sterile. Babies are born with sterile guts." And that's not really true.

Anyway, so, now *B. infantis* has virtually disappeared from American babies' guts at birth. It's gone. And, you know, there's a lot of speculation on, is it the maternal diet? Is it the antibiotics and the meats? Is it all the Lysol and bleach we're putting everywhere, right? And the other thing was that it was shown that in mamas that have *B. infantis*, the baby has to be born vaginally in order to get it from mom. And here's a fun fact for everyone. One of the reasons that we postulate that babies when they're born, they're born facedown is to eat mom's poop. That's so disgusting but stay with me. The *B. infantis* is in mom's gut, in the poop, as is in her vagina, and the babies that are born facedown are more colonized with the *B. infantis* than babies that are born via C-section differently.

And, you know, there's a huge trend out there for mamas to get enemas and stuff to make sure you don't have the poo accident on the delivery table. Well, it turns out that actually is an evolutionary thing that is important for our babies. So, out of the two bacteria, I would say the *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* and *B. infantis* are the two big players...Oh, and another great fun fact, I just finished writing a blog, so I have a lot of nerd facts on the *B. infantis*. But human breast milk makes a very specific oligosaccharide, which is basically a form of sugar. And it's only purpose is to feed *B. infantis*. It serves no other purpose in the environment or in the human body except to feed *B. infantis*.

And I mean, when we look at the evolution of what's going on, the way our babies were before and that less significant chronic disease compared to our babies today plagued by eczema and other issues, and we see these key players missing, you know, just makes you wonder, is it really there's no difference or there really is

a connection? I mean, I'm going with there's a really strong connection between our gut bacteria and our children's eczema.

Katie: I agree. And I've seen that play out, like I mentioned with my son, but also as a doula. I have been at quite a few births. And a lot of those, at least six, I think, I had moms who knew they were gonna need to have a C-section. And so they basically pre-scheduled, there's a whole process for this. And I can link to what I've talked about before in this but of helping seek the baby's gut if they're not born vaginally. Or also interesting correlation here, my last two daughters were born vaginally, but they were born breech. And because they were breached, their head was turned a different way. And, of course, their body left mine before they're head did. And so the microbial transfer didn't happen the exact same way. And we had some minor food intolerances with them early on that we had to, kind of, improve their gut to reverse as well. And so I think there is a really important microbial connection there.

And I think we're only starting to really learn just how important it is. It kind of cracks me up some of the births I've been at when you even bring that up and doctors, kind of, get grossed out. I'm like, "You are at births all day long. You know how this actually happens. It's not a sterile process by any means and it's not supposed to be." But I think we're gonna keep learning a lot more about this. And I think it's good for parents to be aware of to know if that is how your babies enter the world, it's good to have that knowledge to be proactive about their gut health or even if they're born, you know, posterior, sunny side up, or just breech, there's things you might wanna do to help support their gut really early on. Are there other things you recommend to parents starting in those first weeks and months, even with babies that can be helpful for the gut?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Oh, yeah, one of the other things that a lot of parents don't know about is about Tylenol and acetaminophen. There is a very strong correlation between using Tylenol or acetaminophen in children and their risk of developing eczema. It was an elegant study done looking at children of all ages, including teenagers, and how many doses of Tylenol they had over a year. Some had none. Some had once a month for 12 months. Some had more doses. And the more doses of Tylenol, the stronger the correlation and the higher the risk of developing eczema, up to 99% risk of developing eczema in teenagers who are using Tylenol on a regular basis. That is so scary because, you know, we have a fear of fever, we have fear of teething, we have fear of pain in the U.S. I had the privilege of working in New Zealand for a year-and-a-half, where people just accept pain. They were like, "Well, when you live life and you fall out of a tree, you're gonna have pain." And so, they are less likely to take medications. In the U.S., we are so pain adverse, that we are just giving our children Tylenol like it's going out of style, not to mention the fear of fever.

And another one that is not well-known is actually the correlation between reflux medicines and eczema, mind-blowing because, again, fussy babies, colicky babies, oftentimes we reach for an anti-reflux medication, which actually hurts *B. infantis* if we're gonna go back to that guy. But if we're using anti-reflux medication instead of dietary lifestyle modifications, we're adversely affecting the child's gut, which then puts them at high risk for developing eczema. And for folks out there, one of the things that I wanna caution you is when we research stuff, so if you go "top causes of eczema" and it's like, you know, dry air, cold air, topical things, maybe dairy come into it, you don't see Tylenol and Zantac. But when you search, "Is there a correlation

between Tylenol and eczema?" and your, you know, Google page blows up, oftentimes our research is biased by forces that we don't know and don't understand why I don't understand them. And so, when we're researching stuff, it's very interesting how different stuff comes to light depending on how you look it up.

Katie: That is so fascinating and important to know about the reflux risk as well. Are there other things early on that we need to know about, like when kids start getting introduced to food? I know, for instance, I've worked with a company that looked at the research on early allergen introduction and realized that, like, completely avoiding certain foods can be as problematic as starting them too early. And so I know they advocate, like, very small dose introduction in a very controlled, careful way to help avoid actual allergies. But then I know beyond that, like, are there things that are supportive of the gut when babies start reaching that food age?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Well, you know, several studies in that genre actually changed my medical practice when I was practicing like a general pediatrician because they showed the studies coming out of Israel when they were doing small dose controlled foods, high allergen foods to children, they did have less allergies than the children that we did it, let's call it the American way where we're like, "Oh, don't do peanuts until they're older. Don't do eggs until 1. Don't do strawberries until 1." And so, a lot of the medical care has changed based on all the studies and more studies have come out to actually support that.

In the beginning, the things that I...You know, breast milk, like we just talked about is best. And even if...you know, not everybody's body is able to produce breast milk. And we know that. And it's unfortunate. It is hard. If you're able to even produce one ounce is very helpful because of all the different benefits that we already talked about. When we look at different formulas, pay attention to the formula, speak with your doctor, make sure that you're getting formulas that the first ingredient is not corn syrup. And then when we start solid food introduction, I'm about root vegetables, and I'm not about rice cereal, and I don't like oatmeal. And thankfully, never even in my traditional practice, I've never advocated for rice cereal because, well, it has arsenic. And then humans have added iron and made it seem like, oh, babies need to have cereal because of iron but we're giving them processed foods as their first food introduction. And to me, that's ludicrous.

And I go with root vegetables. Always start with the vegetables. And I'm not like, "Oh must do it with this vegetable." I'm like, "Vegetables and then alternate fruits, vegetables, fruits," and then adding in your high allergen foods to that. But I'm all about whole foods, real foods. And, you know, a lot of folks get overwhelmed. When you have a lot of kids, you're like, "Oh, my gosh, I'm not making my own food." I'm like, "It doesn't have to be hard. You could just smoosh an avocado. You could smoosh a banana. If you guys are making sweet potatoes for dinner, smoosh it up with your fork and put it in the fridge and that's the baby's food." It doesn't have to be complicated. I'm not saying that there's no great companies out there that can help you make your life easier in that. I'm just giving examples of foods that you can make at home.

But I'm all about whole foods. I'm really not a big fan of the teething crackers and the teething biscuits. Squeazy packs can also be a problem because a lot of them are filled with citric acid, sometimes natural flavors, sometimes just weird ingredients. I don't even know what they are. So I caution you with that. We



wanna keep the children having real ingredients in their diet and that will keep their guts nice and healthy so that we can prevent the development of eczema.

Katie: And you also mentioned a somewhat controversial topic, and I'm so glad you brought it up, and that was fevers, and if they should be reduced, and if so how they should be reduced. I've written about this before and surprisingly, gotten some of the most strong reactions on both sides about this particular topic. And you are much more qualified than I am to talk about this. I just have parental experience. But from my research, there's so so much that goes into considering what to do about a fever and the fact that the body's immune system does this for a reason. So, it may be like at least the first line of defense shouldn't be just jumping into reducing the fever necessarily, but like I said, you're much more qualified to talk about this than I am. Can you walk us through your approach to fevers and what parents need to know?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Yeah, and just you know, I also get heat for it too. So you're not alone. But when we look at fever, that's the body's response. The way I usually see it, I'm like, "You know what? Let's use the flu virus for a second." Flu virus cannot live by itself. It could survive on a surface for a short period of time, but then it needs a human body to replicate itself. So for simplicity purposes, I'm like, "Okay, the flu virus and its 50 friends come into your body and they use your body as a photocopying machine." The human body's like, "No, we're not gonna have anything to do with that." So it raises the internal thermostat for two reasons.

Number one, it's gonna stop the photocopying machine. And number two, it actually stimulates the immune system for making more antibodies, turning them around quicker and making them stronger. So we need fever to make more antibodies faster. And if you let the child have a fever and let the body do its thing, the body stops the replication. So now your body has to fight 50 viral particles. And I'm doing this super simplistic. Now, if we are giving the child Tylenol and Motrin because we're so afraid of, you know, brain damage, seizures, and such things, which we're gonna talk about in a second, we then allow the photocopy machine to turn back on, now the virus is able to replicate itself to billions. Our immune system is sluggish and worn out because it needs the high temperatures in order to do the job.

So now, the virus has billions of particles that our body has to overcome, which leads us to be sick for like two, three weeks, and it's with no end in sight. Parents are petrified of brain damage. In a neurologically normal chart, the human body will not allow your temperature to get above 105.5. At 105.5, you do not have brain damage. Also, the febrile seizures are a huge concern of parents. There is no amount of Tylenol or Motrin to stop a febrile seizure. A febrile seizure usually happens if a child is doing fine playing, they have a seizure, you pick them up because they have a seizure, and all of a sudden you notice they're burning. It's because it's the rate of rise.

And many studies have been done to see, you know, how can we alternate? What if you alternate Tylenol? What about Motrin? What if...? And none of it has shown to actually prevent febrile seizures. If your child experiences febrile seizures, please speak to your doctor on how to dose medications in this case. And if your child has neurological abnormalities, you're a different case, please speak with your doctor. In all other children, the body needs the fever and it needs to do its work. The other thing that happens is kids look like,

you know, laying around on the sofa, they're not doing anything, that's actually the body saying, "I need my energy to fight this virus. Please don't play."

Children don't eat when they're feeling unwell. That's because the body says, "Please don't eat because I need all my energy in order to fight this virus," on top of some other things. But I think the paranoia is, like, "Oh, my gosh, look at my child, has fever, is laying around not doing anything, I must medicate him," because as a parent we always feel like we have to do something. And when the kids pop off the couch, and they're playing, and they're great, we'll rejoice. However, six hours later, they go down again with fever and now we panic because we think something is horribly wrong. And it's just the immune system trying to overcome the medications that we are trying to do because we're afraid.

Katie: That was such a concise explanation of that, and I hope it offers parents a lot of peace of mind because certainly, it's scary as a parent if your child is suffering in any way, but especially febrile seizures can be very scary but also such a good reminder that the immune system knows what it's doing and fever serves a purpose. Back to the topic of eczema, though. So we've gotten, kind of, a good primer on diet and especially, like, early introduction and what to know about that. What are some of the other factors as kids get older, or if a child has maybe already very severe eczema, what are some other things that can help? Because you already mentioned that people think of eczema as a topical problem. And I know firsthand, nothing topical worked for my son. It wasn't until we addressed the internal that he got better. And at that point, he didn't need the topical stuff. But what are some of the other things that parents need to know to start that process?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Other things that in some kids that are so severely affected and the parents have done everything, histamines are a big problem. And what are histamines? Histamines are, like, little tiny, I call them like confetti and they hang out in mast cells. And so basically mast cells look like balloons with confetti and they patrol our body. And they patrol our body in order to defend us. There actually is a great purpose. So, you have an invading virus, the mast cells explode, the confetti, which is the histamines, explode, and they call in other immune cells in order to fight this battle. Same thing, if you come in close contact with pollen, and mold, and other things.

And some kids, they have so many mast cells and mast cells are so incredibly sensitive that everything triggers them. So there's children that they eat a grape, or they eat pineapple, or they eat a cracker, or they drink water, and they have eczema. They're sensitive to everything, you know, in our course, where, like, they're allergic to life because the parents are continuously trying to figure out which thing, which thing? It's not one thing. It's that their system is over-responsive. It's just so incredibly sensitive that anything they come in contact with may just explode.

So then, we look into factors of, okay, well, is your child consuming a high histamine diet? What is your family history? Could they be lacking in specific digestive enzymes that could be helping in curtailing this issue? Do we have any other gut imbalances because where do the histamine reaction really all begin? In the gut. And then also, do we have anything else in the environment like pets? Mold is a huge...I live in Charlotte, North Carolina, and we are a moldy, moldy place. And so, you know, is mold is a factor in your house? Because if we

can decrease inflammation on the inside, but what about our environment? You know, what are you cleaning with? What kind of things are you doing your laundry...not specifically because it's irritating eczema but the more toxins that we're exposed to from our food, lotions, potions, chemicals in our environment, that can trigger eczema.

And the other thing that is so under-recognized during our pandemic is stress. The stress is out of control. Mental health is...We are at the brink of massive issues. And a lot of times, well, kids can be stressed but I'll tell you something, when the mom is stressed, it goes right to the babies. And the babies...We have documented...We have scientific evidence to show that there's an electromagnetic field, that may sound hokey to some people, but we are able to communicate with our children, and our spouses, and our friends from 3 feet away without having to say a word.

So, you know, imagine the last time that your partner came into the house, you heard the door open, and just the way the door opened and closed, you know it's gonna be...something bad happened and they're tense. And they walk into the room, and then you're tense, and then the kids become tense, without him or her ever saying a word. And so, we have to really hone in on our stress from the social isolation, from the Zoom school, from Zoom work, from all this other stuff because our stress affects our cortisol levels. And our cortisol levels affect our histamines and our other inflammatory markers in our body, which can make us have eczema issues even worse.

Katie: I know you talk about this in-depth in your course but how can parents start addressing the histamine issues? Because certainly for kids that have that, especially, like you said, the ones who are allergic to life, it seems like a daunting process.

Dr. Ana-Maria: You know, I gotta say, a lot of parents feel like they have to do this all on their own because they've lost faith in the physicians they're seeing or the practitioners that they're seeing and they're like, "I must do it. I must heal." And I'm all about, you know, trying to educate, and empower, and inspire families to do it all on their own. When it gets this difficult, it's really important to pair up with somebody that specializes in this because it is hard. And it's even better to have a community of people that are speaking your same language or going through the same thing. Doing everything alone, and now it's highlighted by our social isolation in the great big world, is exhausting. You know, and I also have a question, I'm like, "When did motherhood require an MD degree?" You know, like, and I have a political science degree and a nutrition degree. It's exhausting.

And so the first thing is I'm like, you know, find a community that speaks your language so you can be in a together. Find a provider that can direct you because the issue is children can become malnourished if we're not doing this properly. You can totally pull up a blog on histamine intolerance. There's some great blogs out there. I'll tell you the first few things that are high in histamines are gonna be your processed foods, like we talked about, gluten and dairy, your kombuchas and pickles, leftovers, cold cuts, and then, of course, you go to bananas, and avocados, and strawberries, and then you wanna cry in your pillow because you're giving your children fabulous food but yet they may be affecting your child. So, just proceed with caution when it comes

to histamine diets in children, specifically, because we are not all nutritionists. You know, people go to school for this. And it is a delicate balance so we don't have the children deprived in one nutrient because we're trying to avoid histamines.

Katie: Gotcha. Okay. That makes complete sense.

This episode is sponsored by Four Sigmatic, the superfood mushroom company that I have been talking about and loving for many years! I love all of their products, especially their coffee infused with brain-boosting lion's mane and their reishi elixir at night for awesome sleep. I've also recently been trying their protein powder and really love their peanut butter flavor. Peanut Butter is one of my weaknesses, and I love that I get all the flavor of it in this protein packed format rather than the super-dense calorie version of regular peanut butter. Go to [foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama](https://foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama) and code `wellnessmama` gives 10% off.

This episode is brought to you by Wellnesse. That's Wellnesse with an E on the end. We make personal care products that go above and beyond just non-toxic to actually be beneficial for you from the outside in. I realized years ago that even some of my most naturally minded friends and family members who made an effort to eat organic food and be really cognizant of what they brought into their homes were still using certain personal care products, mainly hair care and oral care. And the reason was, they weren't willing to sacrifice how they looked and felt just to use natural products. And none of the natural products they were finding really lived up to the conventional products as far as how effective they were. So, I resolved to change this and realized I had things that I've been making in my kitchen for years that worked just as well and that I could share with other families, and thus Wellnesse was born. You've probably heard that what goes on our body gets into our body and that many of the chemicals we encounter end up in our bloodstream. To me, this means non-toxic and safe should be the absolute bare minimum baseline for any products that are in our lives. But I wanted to take it a step further. I wanted it to use this to our advantage to actually put beneficial ingredients in our hair care, toothpaste, personal care products so that we could benefit our body from the outside in. Why not use that wonderful skin barrier to our advantage? Our hair care is packed with ingredients like nettle, which helps hair get thicker over time. Our dry shampoo has scalp promoting products that really help follicles stay strong. And our toothpaste, for instance, has a naturally occurring mineral called hydroxyapatite, which is the exact formulation or exact mineral that's on our teeth that's present in strong enamel. So they're all designed to work with the body, not against it to help you have stronger, healthier hair and teeth. We now have a hand sanitizer that doesn't dry out your hands like many hand sanitizers do. I would be honored if you would check it out and I would love to hear your feedback. You can find all of our products at [wellnesse.com](https://wellnesse.com).

So we talked about things and triggers to avoid. And you mentioned a few foods, especially to add in. Are there any supplements or nutrient deficiencies that tend to line up with eczema that parents need to be aware of?

Dr. Ana-Maria: Yeah. Vitamin D. And I know the vitamin D has been hot in the press these days. But now the data on vitamin D supplementation and vitamin D deficiency associated with eczema is mixed. You'll have studies that will show you what you wanna see and studies that show you like you wanna see. But whenever I look at medical literature and that data is mixed, I'm always looking to see but did it help some people? Because supplementing vitamin D, and you need to know what kind of vitamin D to make sure that is a good quality vitamin D, doesn't have other chemicals or additives in it, it is very beneficial in a lot of kids with eczema. Is it in everybody? No. Nothing is in everyone. There's not one thing that I can say and be like, "That is the one thing that's gonna cure." No, it's a mixture of things, that's why we're talking about all of them. So, vitamin D, I find very beneficial. And I do ask that if possible to get your children's vitamin D levels checked. It just helps you be more mathematical about how much supplementation we need to do for vitamin D if possible.

Then we have zinc, mixed data on this as well. But I am very encouraged by some of the studies coming out of 2014 from topical zinc to oral supplementation of zinc sulfate specifically. And then there's a company out there that actually has zinc-infused clothing. And there's studies to show that actually having zozon like a jammies or dry wraps, decreases kids' risk of having eczema flares. Omega-3, essential fatty acids, of course, you guessed it, there's mixed reviews on that one as well. But they are a portion of children that do beautifully well by adding Omega-3s, which are essentially fatty acids. Again, you add them as a supplement on the inside. And you can actually use them as a topical emolient because they're so beneficial to so many things, including brain health.

Probiotics, and knowing specifically which probiotics because sometimes if your child is dealing with histamine overload, some probiotics can make those symptoms worse. That's why it's great to speak with somebody so you can know which probiotics are right for your child. I do use digestive enzymes, a very specific kind. There's one small study that showed a benefit for using digestive enzymes in children with eczema. And so, I do use those, and then I'll use some botanical herbals in children to help cleanse their gut and rebalance it. Because oftentimes, you know, as you know, for every 1 human cell, we are 10 bacteria cells. So what is about 10% and actually, and that's from the National Institute of Health. But there's a very fine balance in bacteria. So if our gut is populated with more bad guys, we're gonna have more eczema and chronic issues versus if we have more good guys. So, I will use botanical herbals in order to try to rebalance the gut so we can get back in a symbiotic relationship with our friends.

Katie: Got it. And like I said, I know you go in-depth because there's so many different factors that come into play here. So I assume every case is somewhat different, but you help parents really dial down and have a partner to work with in figuring that out. I agree with you, motherhood should not have to have a medical degree, although I feel like I have so many listeners who for the sake of their children have become extremely well-educated in different areas. Just I think...Like, there's a joke that no one does better research than a mom when it comes to her kids, even the FBI. But I think the best-case scenarios happen when you have a well-educated parent working with a well-educated practitioner. And that gives the kids the best hope of recovery in this point.

And we've touched on this a little bit but I wanna go a little bit more specific also about the conventional medical approach to eczema because I also have heard from so many parents who have gone to doctors, and tried everything, and really been diligent, and still aren't seeing results. And I feel like maybe there's some holes when it comes to modern medicine and not really addressing all these root causes that you've talked about.

Dr. Ana-Maria: It totally is. There's so much out there. And I just wanna go back to the one thing that you said about us having our MD degree. Actually, my children are the exact reason why I'm a functional medicine doctor is because of their chronic disease, I did all my research, and I got educated, and certified in functional medicine because they were suffering with chronic disease, and I didn't get the answers that I was hoping from the traditional model. And here we are. So, yeah, so I have to say my children are actually my greatest medical accomplishment and the reason why I do holistic medicine now.

But going back to the holes...And a lot of times when I talk to the parents and they're like, "We've tried everything," well, everything that you know to try. And a lot of times, we'll say, "Well, I went to a specialist..." And I'm not knocking on any schools. There are amazing schools out there. But the more prestigious the school, the more we're like, "Oh, but I went to see this doctor and they're from..." let's say Hopkins, let's say Harvard, let's say from...And I'm not bashing any schools, I'm just giving examples. And they just say topical stuff and they do the traditional model things. And they're like, "Well, if there were other options, my doctor would know because he went to a fabulous medical school." And I went to a fabulous medical school too. I did not know until I did more research and I crossed paths with Dr. Mark Hyman. And that's when I was like, "It is true. You know, people should eat more vegetables."

So whenever you're feeling like you have gotten all the answers, the question is, is that all that you know because that's all the people that you hang out with? I didn't know anything about functional medicine and I didn't know anything about treating my children's eczema, asthma, constipation, ADHD until I took a different approach. And it was accidental how I stumbled into the whole thing. Because there's so many factors between your lifestyle factors and nutrition, the environment that you live in, like we talk about, the stress that is around. And sometimes there is an immune issue that may be so much deeper that we need to look further than what we're normally trained to look into.

Katie: I agree. And I'm gonna have a link in the show notes. I know you guys have a specialized link with a specialized discount for anybody listening who has anyone struggling with eczema. But talk a little bit about your course because I think it's also so timely right now when in-person visits have gotten more difficult, even with primary care doctors just because of all of the current climate and everything going on. And so, this is a great option that works from home and it really gives parents the power and the tools to start finding results for their kids right away. But talk a little bit more specifically about your course.

Dr. Ana-Maria: The way I put the course together is basically after treating, you know, hundreds of kids with eczema, and doing all this lab work, and doing food sensitivity tests and poop tests, and doing supplements, and whatever, I was like, "There's a common thread to all these." I'm like, "You know, we can reach a broader

audience and we can help more mamas help their children by doing an online course." And I wanted to make it so unique that...and there's really no other course like there. And what it is, is actually you have modules. So you can do your modules and you go from understanding specifically, because the first question that everyone has, why does my child have eczema?

So that's actually the first thing that you go through, an exercise in the course where I help you identify exactly where the root causes in your child's eczema. And then we go down the list of, like, understanding of how food is related to your skin cells. And then we go into the food eliminations. But all of this is actually side by side with my health coach and myself, and we walk the walk with you, as well as the other mamas. So, when you take...So you have the option of just doing the modules and you can do it all yourself. But I so strongly believe in a community and in helping one another and learning from one another. I don't know everything. I know that there's mamas, just like you said, that are so researching their niche that they teach me, you know, all the time as well.

And so, you go through your modules that are about 10 minutes each, you have PDFs, you have supplements, you have dosing, you have the side effects. Like, everything is explained to you. We give you recipes, and snacks, and all the different stuff. But really, I think what is the jewel of them all is that every Monday at 2:00 on Facebook, my health coach gets on and she talks to my mamas about all the different struggles from parenting, to food, to picky eaters, to those who have adverse reactions to different things. And on Thursdays at 2:00 Eastern Time, I get on my Facebook Live with all my mamas where I address medical questions.

So, not only are you doing modules, but you actually can get personalized care. So, when the children are not doing exactly how you'd expect based on the course, like my mamas come on there, and we fine-tune stuff, and somebody's like, "Well, you know, I read about topical B12. What can you tell me about that?" I'm like, "Okay. Great. Let me look into that." You know, we've talked about zeolite. We talk about mold. We talk about all these other things that are not even in the course because my mamas want information. They want, you know, more stuff. They're sponges, and then we have a direction. And as I said, they teach me some stuff. And I'm like, "I had no idea about the goat milk flakes," that we learned last Thursday.

You know, all stuff that then we can share with other mamas in the community is what a supporting one another. So when somebody's doing poorly, all the other mamas are jumping in, and we're having a discussion, and brainstorming. And when I brainstorm with that one mom, it usually shows beneficial for the other moms. They're like, "Oh my gosh, that's exactly what I was gonna ask," or, "I didn't even think about that." So, it is a very collegiate way of doing an online course. And basically, you get to see a health coach and a physician twice weekly.

Katie: That's awesome. Well, like I said, that link will be in the show notes for you guys listening, especially if you're exercising or driving. All of that at [wellnessmama.fm](https://wellnessmama.fm), you'll find all the links and the discount code there. And another question that's somewhat unrelated that I love to ask at the end of interviews is if there is a book or a number of books that have had a profound influence on your life or been really inspirational to you, and if so, what they are and why.

Dr. Ana-Maria: The latest book that I have taken to heart is actually "Fiber Fueled" by Dr. Will B. Like, I mess up his last name every single time. He has been super inspirational. He is a gastroenterologist, traditionally trained, and he talks about plant-based diet. I am not fully plant-based. I do a lot of plants, but I'm not plant-based. And one of the takeaway from his book has been plant points. And so right now on Instagram, we have a big challenge going on with plant points. And the children are obsessed because, you know, who's gonna give up a good competition between siblings? So I'm having children that have not been eating a lot of plants, generally speaking, doing amazing because they wanna outcompete their siblings. So his book has been really fantastic.

And the other books, like I said earlier, Dr. Mark Hyman's books, which actually I accidentally stumbled upon when I was trying to get my children feeling better. And what he refers to in his books is how we use our food to be our medicine. And I can't really pick one specific one. If I were, perhaps the one that actually speaks to...because, like, what should you eat? Because a lot of people are like, "Okay, great. So now I heard about the different oils, what olive oil should I have?" "Okay. Great. I should do free-range, red meat because of the labels, how do I read a label?" And I found his book to be so helpful in helping navigate our process world.

Katie: Awesome suggestions. I will put links to all of those in the show notes as well so you guys can find, and read, and learn. But Dr. Ana-Maria, thank you so much. I think this is such an important topic. I know you have so many more resources available on your website. I'll make sure those are linked as well. But I hope that this has helped a lot of parents and will help a lot of kids. And I'm just really appreciative of you doing this work to help so many.

Dr. Ana-Maria: I'm so excited to be here. And you do such amazing work for so many families. And I am honored to be part of your tribe and talking to all the moms because there's so much more to doing medicine and to everything that we do for our children. And I hope as a community that we just come out just healthier on top.

Katie: Absolutely. I've always said moms are a force of nature. And I think when you have amazing moms in connection with amazing practitioners like you, then amazing things happen, and very grateful to you for being here today, and very grateful, of course, to all of you for listening, for sharing your most valuable resources, your time and your energy with both of us. We're so glad that you were here, 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.