



Episode 531: Donna Gates on The Body Ecology Diet, Yeast Infections, Enemas, and Histamine

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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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. And this episode is all about the gut, and specifically, what Donna Gates calls your "Body Ecology." I'm here with Donna Gates, who is an international best selling author of a book called "The Body Ecology Diet." I can't believe I haven't actually had her on before. She has been in this world for 25 years, and she's been on a mission to change the way the world eats and also to really delve into a lot of aspects of health that relate to the gut.

In this episode, we go deep on a whole lot of different topics, including her own health struggles that led her into this field, what The Body Ecology Diet is, how yeast is often an underlying issue in many health problems, how this led to crossover research that ended up helping many families with autism as well. The surprising way she uses enemas, with surprising results. A few practical tips for helping avoid colic and sleep problems in babies. And then we talk about specifics, like can people with histamine issues eat fermented foods? What

about the oxalates? And a lot of other directions from there. So we get pretty specific, and she gives a lot of very practical tips, and I learned a lot, so let's join Donna. Donna, welcome. Thanks so much for being here.

Donna: Thank you very much, Katie, for asking me. I have been a fan and a subscriber of "Wellness Mama" for at least four years. And I'm always...you know, have my antennas up for cool podcasts that you have on, guests that you have on. So now I'm one of them, so thank you.

Katie: Well, I'm excited we finally get to chat. I've followed your work for a long time as well. And honestly, I can't believe we haven't had this conversation sooner. But I'm excited to jump in today. And I would guess quite a few of our listeners have already heard of you. But for those who haven't, I know you're an expert in the fields of digestive health and nutrition. And I would love to hear a little of your background, how you got started on this path?

Donna: Well, I got started like many, many of us do because I was super sick. Obviously looking back I never was fed properly. I grew up in the south with you know, a lot of vegetables but they have fatback. And then for my body that was not good.

And the real triggering thing that happened was that my skin broke out and I wasn't detoxifying efficiently, and some skin broke out. And my mother took me to the dermatologist, of course, and they gave you in those days, very high doses of antibiotics and birth control pills. So it would be years later before I figured what was really really wrong with me was I had now a systemic yeast infection. But along with that digestive problems and no energy.

I mean, I look back and I think how did I even make it through being a young mother, having babies, and all that with no energy? I just faked it. You know, I faked it because I wanted to be a good mom and have a good life. And I never, never stopped looking for answers like I always had my feelers out for anything.

And I actually studied a whole bunch of different disciplines. I went to Japan and studied healing myself for... I got certified there. And then I was like, right for eight years. And that was a lot...good because I learned a lot about certain foods that we didn't have here and also Chinese medicine, which I became really interested in. I spent a year studying acupuncture and I thought, you know, that's not right for me, there's something else I need to pursue and go after.

But you know, I did everything super...huge amounts of supplements, raw foods, everything that was available. I did it for a while and so I learned a lot and some things worked, helped to a certain degree, but because I really wasn't addressing the root cause I really never ever got well.

And then finally, very fortunately, I met Dr. William Crook at a conference out in LA. And he was just introducing his book and signing it there. And fortunately, I had some time with him sitting in the lobby around a fountain and started asking him questions. And he said to me, "You know, we don't think..." His book, by the way, was called "The Yeast Connection." He's an amazing person. He never stopped trying to get the word out about yeast.

So he said, "You know, we do not..." meaning Orian Truss, his friend, "And I do not think that there is a cure for this condition." And in my naivety, I said, "Oh, there has to be and I'm gonna find it." So I did everything he said to do in the book, but it was, you know, closer, but not there. So I took all those years of learning about basic principles like acid, alkaline, yin and yang, which I call the expansion-contraction principle of balance. You know, put it all together, and I created this whole new world.

And I always felt behind me amazingly, was some kind of power because I kept finding information, kept planning to write a book to help other people but it wouldn't finish. Like, every time I think, okay, now I'm done, a whole piece of information would show up that I had to put in there.

And so four years later, I finally put out "The Body Ecology Diet." And then by word of mouth, it's spread everywhere. I mean, health food stores carried it back then. And lots of people that worked there were recommending it.

It worked, you know, I called it the...the book was called "The Body Ecology Diet." But Body Ecology is more than just a diet. So I've gone on to all these years, what...? It's almost more than 25 years and have continued to delve deeply into yeast infections. And of course, there was not any information hardly out there but now there is a lot. And then just because I have this experience of a lot of years, you know when you find something you can kind of synthesize it and tie it in and start connecting more and more dots.

But what's frustrating for me is that I see how very, very important it is to conquer yeast infection. And I also see that in tests like the organic acid test, for example, practitioners are seeing yeast shows up all the time, probably all the time. But often along with mold too you know, they're both fungus, different though in the symptoms they produce.

So here's this thing called candidiasis yeast infections and I don't find that anybody is taking them seriously enough. And if they really understood what they're doing, and how impossible it is to get rid of them, and how strict you have to be in the beginning, and how they're tied to so many other things that are wrong. You know, I always love a chance to talk about yeast infections.

Katie: Well, it sounds like there's a lot more resources now than there used to be and a lot more knowledge about this. But for someone who...I mean, I would guess a lot of people are limited to the idea of yeast infection in maybe the context of like a vaginal yeast infection. But this is obviously something that can be very systemic and affect many other parts of the body. So how might someone know if they have an underlying yeast issue? And then maybe what are a couple of the broad steps to start dealing with it?

Donna: Well, I think one of the best ways is to know your history, like have you had antibiotics, birth control pills, for example? Have you been raised on a lot of sugar in your diet? So the history for sure. The organic acid test will confirm it.

And then you're right Katie, that a lot of women's have told me "Well, I don't have a yeast infection." They're thinking only of a vaginal yeast infection. They don't realize that it's systemic meaning that it has left the gut and the vagina...well, you know, what's in the gut can move into the vagina too. But you know, it's left the gut because they took antibiotics for a little while or a long while, like I did for years for my skin.

So you get this yeast moving from the gut causing a great deal of inflammation and leak...what people call today, leaky gut, so it's very permeable. And then it furiously moves into the body and colonizes everywhere. Like you know for sure, like if people have had any kind of transplant surgery, or like, say, a hip replacement, or a heart valve or something, those colonize almost immediately with yeast. And diabetics, their blood sugar is always out of control, they always have yeast infection. Anyone with cancer has a yeast infection.

It's just this really important thing that I guess it's sometimes I think it must be so common. And you hear that it is a normal inhabitant of the body. So I think people just kind of shrug their shoulders and dismiss it and don't realize what it's doing. So it's just...and you know, it's also connecting the dots like you can't just read a research article.

That's what happened years ago, when I was writing the book and discovering all this information about this world in our gut that wasn't called the microbiome then it was called the inner ecosystem. I called it, I came up with that name because I wanted to tell people look there's a world of microbes inside of us, and they're super important. And we're missing that, we're going off to explore outer space and deep into the ocean, but guess what?

Anyway, but here's the thing, I would go out there, I mean, searching, and there was tons of information that microbiologists had out there telling about microbes, different kinds of microbes, and they were just importing all their research to each other and nobody was making use of it. So I thought, look, this is important, we need to know about this.

So that's how I got into that. I mean, by the time the book came out, it was the first ever to talk about this world in our gut. Stevia, we didn't have Stevia at that time, we had Aspartame, NutraSweet, and Equal, which Monsanto wanted us to use all the time which creates bad side effects. I found Stevia and it was an interesting story too.

But like I said, I just felt so blessed and guided at times, doors would open up, opportunities would come up. So you know, by the time the book came out, I had a lot of information. I had a chapter on Stevia and how important it was to be sugar-free and here's how to use it. And at that time, we just had a powder but then I then moved to a liquid because it's way easier to work with the liquid than that little fine white powder, which looks kind of like cocaine.

Katie: I remember those early days of Stevia as well and how much...there are so many better options now. And I know that anytime we're talking about the gut, obviously, that has rollover effect into the entire body. And from following your work, I know that you've also jumped into the world of autism.

And there are of course many families who are working through that, and that you do a lot of work in this area as well. So I'd love to hear how that connection happened. And then maybe some specifics of what you learned?

Donna: Okay, so I think a lot of times the reason things manifest for us is we have this heart desire you know, to wanna do something. And I majored in child development in college and really always had this very worried feeling about the future for our children. So I just kind of, if there's any way I can make a difference I wanted to.

So then I heard about this thing called autism that was starting to, you know, show up in the world. And I had an opportunity, I was living in Atlanta, to go to a conference, right there, was probably the first or second one that the DAN, Defeat Autism Now group... They're not the same doctors that started it, but they were amazing. And they all had children with autism. And they didn't wanna give their kids drugs and so they were looking for answers.

But what they had done was they'd done a really good job, in my opinion of identifying what the symptoms were, what do the kids have besides, obviously, brain...you know, lots of things happening with their brain. They had gut problems big time, diarrhea, constipation, you know, there's pictures of them smearing their feces all over the wall. Oh, and then they said they had yeast problems. And I thought, well, wait a minute, gut and yeast are my two kind of somewhat specialties and so I'm gonna see if I can help.

So I put it out there. Nobody came for about a year. And then somebody showed up with a little boy. And he was almost three. And I said, "Well, I don't know for sure..." but I had to learn, you know, what's going on. And she taught me. And then she shared with me everything that happened. And I shared what I would do.

So his name is Thomas. And today, he goes, in South Carolina to a university there. And he's the top student and he has been for a really, really long time. So he's been well, within a year, he was well. So his mom was real excited, obviously and she told all of her friends, "Look what I'm doing, it's working for Thomas." And nobody cared, they just wanted to go to the doctor and give them drugs or whatever. And they accepted the diagnosis as if it was hopeless.

So she was very upset about it. And I went to a...I think it was probably an A-Forum conference, and then I...or some conference, I don't remember. But there were other mothers and if I found out that they had children with autism and that's why they were there, I invited them to join Diane and I for this...to join us in a group.

So what happened was, we ended up with BEDROK. They eventually named themselves BEDROK, which stands for Body Ecology Diet Recovering Our Kids. And eventually over...to make a long story short, a couple of 1000 parents and practitioners were members. And they were amazing at sharing feedback and sharing with other moms. And it just spread all over the world. I mean, there were people in Hong Kong and all over Europe, different parts of Europe, and everywhere, that were doing it with good results.

And then the doctors started seeing that...you know, the kids would go to these really good doctors and the doctors would notice great improvement. So they realized that diet was important because before that, they sort of thought maybe gluten-free, casein-free was maybe okay, but it only took people so far. And they didn't know yet anything about the gut, about fermented foods. And fermented foods were well, one particular, the fermented coconut water, which I came up with this idea to ferment the coconut water because it was becoming popular, but it's full of sugar.

That was like way first thing to introduce because, first of all, it's easy to make. Well, it wasn't that easy to make, opening coconuts is a pain. Put a starter in which I had fortunately, that time. And then you have to let it ferment but you could hide it in anything like their junky juice or whatever. And it started working. And then what happened was they started...because now we understand that, you know, they were fixing their gut, changing the environment of the gut, so the brain was getting better.

So I would get emails like, "I can't believe this, but my son crawled up on my lap and grabbed my broccoli." They only ate usually bread and pizza crust and bad stuff so lots of carbs. You know, and everybody learned and everybody shared.

And I also added enemas into the program because they are not good detoxifiers that's one of the things going on that puts a child at risk for autism. And so it took me a while to get a bigger age because I thought they're really gonna think I'm crazy talking about enemas. This is like young, modern, you know, hip, very cool, very well educated moms, and they don't even know what an enema is, I'm sure.

But right away, some did it, right away they reported amazing changes because they said, "I can't believe what came out of my son, he hasn't been alive but two years and look what's...I mean, this stuff is incredibly toxic." Well, I, you know, didn't know as much as I do now today, but you see we're making that all the time. And we're making those toxins, ammonia, and all kinds of nasty stuff and it's down in the gut. And so when you use an enema, you're rinsing that out.

There would be stories about the kids would bring the enema bucket to their mom and ask for an enema because they felt so much better. And one mom, you know, regularly did an enema with her son every week, on Friday, it was their routine. And she said that after like maybe the second or third month, she said, "One day he had this enormous bowel movement and after that, his...like today, he's very well." And he was the oldest in our group he was 10, 10 years old, which is older. The earlier you can start to catch it and treat children the much better chance you have of turning around quickly.

Katie: Several follow-up questions to that. The first being with the enema, I feel like the...most people have probably at least heard of enemas, maybe the majority probably have not tried them. So what's happening in the body when you do an enema? What makes that so beneficial?

Donna: Well, I actually...by the way, I figured mums are very uncomfortable so I suggested that they start with themselves first. Like buy an enema bucket, and they're only holding two quarts, with a child you use like maybe two cups. And the tube is very tiny, and it's plastic, and you can rinse it out and hang it up to dry. Wait, would you ask me that question again, because I went off on a tangent?

Katie: Yeah, just like biologically, why is an enema so effective, and maybe also some guidelines around enema usage.

Donna: Okay, so effective because those toxins that are stored inside of us every single day that we're not eliminating, are definitely poisoning the brain. The environment is really toxic so if you're eating, for example, fermented vegetables, which have an amazing diversity to, you know, end up in the gut and change the environment, you know, you need to help them out a little bit by rinsing away the really toxic stuff.

And it's very easy to understand this for example, because like, let's say you're the mayor of a city and you have this one nice area, location, good location, but it's full of slums and crime and dangerous. And so you

decide that you're gonna move those people into nicer homes, and then level that, clear it out and then start all over again.

And so that's kind of what we're...it's definitely what we're doing. We're removing...you know, actually, in functional medicine today that is the first thing you remove, and then you repair the gut lining, and then you replace or reinoculated healthy bacteria into the gut. You do have to remove those nasty toxins because it's impossible for the good guys to survive in that really toxic environment.

Katie: And you mentioned the younger...you like started with someone with autism that typically the easier the recovery was, which makes me think there is probably also a preventative aspect to this as well. And now with all these years of clinical experience, I'd love to hear like, are there things that we can do as parents even preconception while pregnant or with little children to help kind of stack the odds in their favor?

Donna: Thank you for asking that, Katie, that's one of the reasons I love listening to your podcast you always ask these great questions. So I would be lecturing autism a lot and places like that, and I kept trying to get this word out there that autism can be prevented. We need to be getting that message out in the world, we need to prevent it. It went from 180 down boys, you know, per...I mean, 1 in 180 down to 1 in 40 now, still getting worse. So things are not improving.

And it's gotten to the point where people are accepting it, doctors are treating it but they're kind of they're not making progress. And so it seems like they don't get really what they need to do. But you've got to start early. And you do have to detoxify and get those detoxification pathways open. And the prevention though it's very real.

So since then, there were always parents that said, you know, "I'd like to have another child but I'm afraid to have another one." Now fortunately, many people have. And a lot of other women have come to me to ask for help, you know, I wanna have a healthy baby right up front. And so I have something that I teach our mothers, they eat really well during the pregnancy, they eat the fermented foods during the pregnancy that gives the right kind of microbes, for example, in the birth canal.

But once the babies made it safely into the world, and you realize, you know, he's breathing well and everything, and bonded with mom and dad which is super important. The next most important thing to start thinking about is how can we establish this important world in our baby's gut so that he can live safely in the world, you know.

The world is full of pathogens, and nature has got everything all figured out, obviously, or we wouldn't be here as human beings, or other animals. These microbes that colonize our guts, and our skin and so on, and our

nasal passages, and lungs and everything, they're mostly beneficial. So right then and there you wanna start the baby with the right kind of microbes in his gut.

So the mothers have been eating fermented vegetables through the pregnancy, and I've encouraged them to...just the day after birth to take the juice, dilute it, and take a little bit of it and drop it in the baby's mouth.

Now, this absolutely means they're never gonna have colic, which is a big deal. Because when a baby starts out life with he's happy, he's bonding, mom and dad are not staying up all night, you know, like completely exhausted, because they're getting up all the time, the baby's clearly in pain, and you don't know what to do about it. Now you're setting the center ecosystem in place. Now, that is a good thing to do a couple of times.

And then the mom is eating the fermented vegetables you know, the healthy bacteria in her breast milk. But also the other thing is Bifidus is the main bacteria in a baby's gut. So like we have a product called Bifidus Power Blend, and I've encouraged moms to take just a little bit of it, you know, pump their breast milk and have a bottle and put some in there every day and give their baby the Bifidus.

My own daughter-in-law did that, the first baby she didn't do it with and her little girl who's just five months old now, she did do it. And she always remarks when I go over there, how easy it is to raise her, how she sleeps from 8 to 8, how healthy and you know, she's growing so well the doctor always comments. That's what you want to do. And then obviously don't...these kids with a stronger immune system don't necessarily need to be rushed off for any antibiotic which will immediately destroy their inner ecosystem.

So another thing breastfeeding mothers, did you know? Is right around six weeks, the baby will look like he or she is coming down with a cold, and their little cheeks will get all red and rashy and everything. In Chinese medicine, this is the lungs, and that's an indication the lungs are now you know, purifying.

But you know, to me, what I interpret that to be is the immune system has gone out now for its sort of first serious practice run, to try...everybody, all those cytokines and other...you know, look at everything you know, is now starting to practice to conquer this, to handle this, maybe infection. It's just building the immune system. It's almost like a practice drill perhaps in a lot of ways.

But of course, usually, the mother doesn't know that. She's sure the baby's gonna, you know, die, that she can't breathe or anything and scared to death it's her first baby. And she'll rush him to the doctor who happily gives them an antibiotic. And there we go. There goes the very important you know, ecosystem. So if you interview the kids, you'll find out that most of them have that kind of history, gut problems from the get-go, the mother has a yeast infection.

Here's another really important, you know, thing I've learned that I wish they'd do research on, is that... So a woman at that time was, say in her...she was just coming of childbearing age and she...like my daughter for example. I'm a baby boomer.

So our baby boomers' daughters began having children. Well, when they were born, we didn't know everything I just told you so we did take our baby to the doctor and the doctor did give them an antibiotic, and they were handed out like candy really. So that generation of women, the baby boomers daughters have yeast infections from the beginning.

Now, what happens is like many infections, you know, viral infections, yeast infections, and so on, we can pass those infections on to our kids, and people pass their yeast infection on. So, you know, women will say to me "Well, I didn't have a vaginal yeast problem."

But, you know, they don't realize that, when they're pregnant, their estrogen goes up, their progesterone goes way up, even the cortisol goes up. All these things are really important for the baby but they happen to also be feeding the yeast. And so her minor yeast infection that she might have been keeping under control has now gotten more acute. And then her baby is likely to come into the world with yeast infection.

An example of that is Cradle cap for example because that's a biotin deficiency, but the yeasts consume biotin like crazy. So that...or a diaper rash. If you see those signs, just, you know, start giving your baby the healthy probiotics and Bifidus and all, it will... So they outnumber the yeast because the yeast are pathogenic but they're in small numbers. And if you change the environment, they won't survive. If you have more of the good bacteria, they can't control the environment and cause the problem.

So there's a solution and then there's this prevention. Now, you know, they...there's a period of time where they kept saying, oh, it's genes. Which really made me mad, because I thought, well, we all have certain genes. So they tested the kids and they found out that most of them had...about 80% have MTHFR, which is methylation, or other genes in that cycle, vitamin D receptors really common, but it's really common period, in everybody.

So when you look at the genes, you see, okay, they have these genes. Yeah, but a number of these other people they have the genes, and they didn't become autistic. I think certain things are going on, they're poor detoxifiers they have more toxins in their system and they can't get them out.

The yeasts are making toxins acetaldehyde for example, it's very nasty toxin that yeast produce, not mold, but yeast produce acetaldehyde. And so you know, there's just a lot of strikes against the newborn baby and we're not tying all these pieces together to help the kids get off to a really good start, reverse their destiny so to speak. It's not genes, in my opinion at all, because you know, now we know.

So what if you have these genetic variants? Let's keep them from being expressed. And if they're not being expressed, they're really not that big a...especially in children, they can be more of a problem when we get older, and our DNA gets more damaged but they really aren't.

And a lot of them, you know, there's an antidote to that gene vitamin D receptor, you wanna check and see if the transporter gene that carries the vitamin D, could it be that, you know? We can look at those things today we can get a much better picture of how to support them genetically, but I do not believe genes are the cause of autism.

Katie: Based on what I've seen, I would definitely agree with you. And I've had several functional medicine pediatricians on this podcast, and they all made the same statement, which is that the vast majority, in fact, almost all, upwards of 90% of childhood illnesses, don't need any kind of treatment whatsoever and will resolve without antibiotics. Which I thought was a higher number than most parents talk about.

And they explain that fever is actually a good response in the body, you don't need to run straight to antibiotics and fever reducers. And to your point, those things are also damaging to the gut. And I know from reading your work, fermented foods are obviously especially fermented vegetables, a big pillar of this. And from what I understand, you're actually a big part of the reason we can now find these things so widely available in stores today.

But I think anytime we start talking about fermented foods, at least, when I've written about them, I get questions related to a few specific things. The first being what about if someone has a histamine issue, can they still consume fermented foods?

Donna: Well, by the way, speaking of histamine, Candida is a major cause of mast cell activation, you know, people with mast cell problems and all types of allergies and histamine because the yeasts produce acetaldehyde a lot of it 24/7. There's a gene...speaking of genes there's a gene called ALDH, and it processes acetaldehyde and it becomes totally overwhelmed completely if you have yeast in your body. So people with yeast infections are very histaminergic. In other words are very, very easily producing histamine. So that's super, super important to do that.

And then I would say...you know, I would recommend at first don't eat fermented foods. Let your bucket, so to speak, empty for a while like maybe months or six weeks or something. But here's the thing the problem isn't the food that's high in histamine is sort of...like "Body Ecology," our diet is based...I mean if I get a chance to explain it more.

But you know, it's...I don't think you should eat a lot of high histamine, certain ones particularly, wave the red flag at the bull. Just, you don't need a whole lot of high histamine foods. But the real problem if you have histamine issues or mast cell it's really the gut, you wanna fix your gut. And there's a lot of help today in doing that and functional medicine practitioners are really focused on that.

And here's a very important myth I'd like to dispel and that is that there's like...fermented foods are not all alike in any way. Some of them are super high histamine producers like obviously beer and wine and kombucha, super histaminic.

So, you know, I would even say in the beginning you don't wanna have fermented yogurt or dairy. I would stay away from everything for a while. Then, however, I would start with fermented vegetables made the way I've been teaching people for a long time how to make. Because there is one particular microbe lactobacillus acidophilus that is a great histamine degrader. So, if you make your fermented vegetables and add a starter, that's, you know, lactobacillus acidophilus with plantarums. It's called plantarum, that's the acidophilus name.

So you put a package of that into your brine and then mix that into fermented vegetables and pack them in jars. That plantarum grows out in vast numbers. It's there anyway because planetarium you can tell it comes from plants. But now you've got hundreds and hundreds of times more per CFU per tiny little spoonful and they then can degrade histamine. They are also antiviral. There are so many great things they do, they also degrade oxalates for example.

One of my favorite recipes, or what I like for people to make is to take some...you know, maybe they do red cabbage and beets, and fennel or something. But the beets, which are very high in oxidants, by the way, that are really good for you. If you ferment them and put in the starter, all the oxalates are gone, and now you're eating the wonderful benefits of beets, reducing that nitric oxide good for circulation and heart and everything, but you don't have the oxalates.

So fermenting is a good way to get rid of oxalates and things that we would want to eat too. So there's so many benefits, but they're not all the same. And people are you know, buying all these, I mean waters with bacteria and everything added into them, they're not really medicinal either.

I'm talking about the first place to start for sure is with fermented vegetables. See, they have incredible diversity in them that's really key in conquering infections in the gut. They come in and they...so many different types. There's not just the bacteria in there, there're phages.

Phages are viruses that actually kill bad bacteria, you know and they're really important. For every bacteria, there's 10 phages. They're on the planet in great number to control the bacteria to keep them from getting out of hand. Kind of think of them as like policemen standing around that if you know, somebody gets out of hand they eat him up.

But anyway, there's a lot of important things besides nutrients in our hands. But here's the thing, if we really understood the power of the gut and focused on that from the beginning of life, don't wipe it out. Build your baby's immune system and then he's not gonna be sick all the time. You're not gonna you know, take him to the doctor who doesn't know anything better and wipe out his inner ecosystem.

Because you know, we...especially now with this COVID thing, we really, really want to have a strong immune system. I think people are aware of that. I don't think people realize that with COVID you get a yeast infection. So everybody who's out there with a long hauler problems are gonna have now high yeast and other viruses are activated too. You know, Epstein Barr herpes viruses are now activated too.

So it really gets back to where do we start? We've gotta have a healthy gut. And so no, I would say not in the very, very beginning, because people are so sensitive. And you know, I think a lot of people eat packaged foods, they eat foods that have been left out in the air, so bacteria grows on them. You really need things like fish, for example, you need to buy it, prepare it, eat it. Only buy enough to eat right then and there. Then if you add a scoop or two of fermented vegetables in the meal with the fish, they're gonna degrade the histamine for you, too.

So they're really what would you call them? Like, the antidote so often to things. Like even I would say to somebody, I was mad I ate a cake last night and I'm feeling really bad. And I said well, anytime that happens, you just put in a couple of spoonfuls of fermented vegetables when you get home. Because down in your gut, where it's all gonna end up those bacteria are gonna eat the sugar and whatever from the cake. So they're an antidote often too for things.

Katie: And I'm so glad you touched on the oxalates a little bit as well. I'd love to dive deeper in these because I feel like maybe a lot of people don't have a full understanding of what they are, and what's happening in the body, and why. I believe in Body Ecology, you recommend a pretty low oxalate diet, but that doesn't necessarily mean a low vegetable diet at all. So can you explain more of the pieces of that equation and what oxalates are and how we can help consume them in a healthy way and mitigate too much of them?

Donna: Yeah, you know, a long time ago, when I developed the diet and everything I said like 20% animal protein, 80% vegetables. Well these days, you know, years later, I would still stick to that. But I've refined it more.

So you wanna find out foods that are super high in histamine, foods that are suppressing the DAO enzyme because that enzyme it's a gene. You know, it's important for...you know, the DAO enzyme degrades histamine in the gut when we eat. And for example, coffee does, so don't have coffee with your meal. Black tea does, Mate and all these caffeinated drinks, they're suppressing that DAO enzyme, which is not good.

So oxalates are...you know, in foods are lectins and oxalates and you know, there's components of the foods that could be a problem for us. They're not a problem if we have a healthy gut. So just looking at oxalates alone, they are in the food and they cause stones when they get into the body. They're supposed to be bound into the gut and gobbled up by a bacteria called oxalobacter formigenes. And this little guy, his only purpose in life is to eat oxalates, that's all he does.

But wipe him out with an antibiotic or long-term antibiotic and he's permanently gone. He's one of those missing microbes that Dr. Martin Blaser talks about. So now you're eating these foods thinking, oh, you know, these are good and healthy, they're real popular, everybody recommending them. But you don't have anything to...nobody is in there, eating the oxalates up.

So they cause stones once they get into the body they can...they're very well known for causing kidney stones, but they can cause stones anywhere. Like one research study I have shows that I think it was 65% of them end up in the bones displacing some cells, weakening our bones, for example. We would never know they were in there.

So they can go anywhere and they can cause pain. I've had people, for example, one man in his mid-40s, his father had terrible rheumatoid arthritis, and he knew he was heading in that direction because he was in pain all the time. But when I looked at what he ate, he was eating so many high oxalate foods, all these nuts, and seeds and almond milk and spinach in his smoothie in the morning.

So I said, well just start here don't eat those foods and you know, eat these instead, there are plenty others to eat. And so he emailed in about under three weeks and he said, "It's amazing I've no pain anymore."

So you don't have to eliminate every single food that has oxalate in it because it's commonly in plant foods and never in animal proteins, never in dairy, but definitely in these plant foods but in varying amounts. So the ones that are super high would be like spinach, and turnip greens, chocolate which is so popular, certain nuts and seeds like chia which is really popular is high but flax seeds are not.

But if you have fats like flax oil, for example, walnut oil or something like that. Walnuts are high, but the walnut oil is not high. So, you know, you're putting out the...when you press the oil, for example, you're pressing out the oxalates for the most part.

Okay, so on "The Body Ecology Diet," we had lots of, you know, vegetables fermented vegetables right from the beginning. And then I had quinoa and millet in there because they're seeds, not grains. And they're grain-like and they provide fiber, which is really important for the healthy gut, which I think everybody knows that.

But you know, then I found out oh, my gosh, they are high in oxalates. So I switched the method of cooking and tried to explain to people that you want to get a pot of water on the stove, get it boiling away. And then put your soaked quinoa in there, or you can buy sprouted quinoa today, that's same thing, already done for you.

And so you just pour that into your boiling water and let it go for about 12 minutes, not too long, because you don't want it to get mushy. Then you take it off the heat, the quinoa settles to the bottom and then you pour it through a strainer with tiny little holes. And it should be nice and fluffy and way lower in oxalates now. And for millet, you do the same thing except you have to go about 15 minutes longer total and then draining that, you know, too. But it really makes a big difference to prepare foods.

Sweet potatoes, which is really big in the Paleo community they're very, very high in oxalates. So same thing you know, cut them up, put them in water boil them. As far as the other potatoes go, the lowest in oxalates would be your redskin potatoes. And if you peel them even more so. So you can, like peel them put them in pot until they're soft, drain them. And then add some butter and parsley to them and that's quite delicious and salt, you know, too. There's all kinds of solutions out there for anything you need help with today.

Katie: And we've talked a lot about the fermented foods which I know are a big part of "The Body Ecology Diet." What are some of the other pillars of that or maybe things that are avoided in certain phases, things that are added in at certain phases, or just some general guidelines there?

Donna: Okay, so let's say that you start eating coconut kefir and you notice anytime you have fermented foods, you bloat up. To me, that's like almost a diagnosis completely, that you have SIBO or SIFO. So that's either bacteria or fungus in the small intestine.

So again, it's the same type of thing you don't want the fermented foods then, go back and treat the gut, you know, take care of the SIBO get rid of it. Then you would...and there's lots of help on how to do that today, of

course, tons of wonderful podcasts and information online and everything. But that's what you have to do first, step by step. Which is, by the way, one of the Body Ecology principles.

Body Ecology is based on seven principles. One of them is the principle of uniqueness. So today, there's all these diets out there that look just like body ecology, like Paleo, and Keto, and Bulletproof and everything. But the way they differ, most of them don't stress gut health and fermented foods and things like I do, and you know, avoid high histamine foods and oxalates, they don't do that. But Body Ecology is kind of all those things.

And again, that's where the principle of uniqueness comes in because you might need to be more Keto, but maybe if you're blood type A, As don't handle a lot of fat. That is another chapter in my book. I'm a big believer in clues that come from your blood type that you should know about. And also you may not have the right enzymes for digesting the fat and the pancreatic enzymes, for example.

So it's really...you know, you can't just put everybody on a Keto diet for some reason and think they're gonna do great on it. As lack an enzyme called alkaline phosphatase in the small intestine so they really don't do well in large amounts of fat at any one time. So I think that's where the principle of understanding that principle, applying it, you know, to our health and our diet, and everything is really important to do these principles.

So step by step is another one of my second...you know, the two are my favorite. Step by step is really important because you don't just start here because you heard about something, you wanna go back to the beginning. So you're heading on a journey, you're gonna go to France or something, you gotta start somewhere. Same with healing you know, you got this problem that's been identified. Your destination is to get rid of it. Where do you start? So step by step, it's really important.

Katie: And I will, of course, put links in the show notes so people can find it. We've talked a lot about your book, I'll make sure people can get directly to it, the show notes at wellnessmama.fm for all of you guys listening.

This podcast is sponsored by Wellnesse, that's wellness with an E on the end. The brand I co-founded when I realized there just weren't truly natural alternatives to some personal care products that performed as well as many conventional brands. We've been sharing our popular toothpaste and haircare for almost two years, but today I'm excited to tell you about a new star in our lineup. The charcoal toothpaste that provides the same mineral-rich benefits as our original whitening formula with a boost of charcoal for extra whitening and mouth-supporting benefits. It's made without glycerin using oral microbiome-friendly ingredients to help your body create stronger, healthier, whiter teeth while you sleep. I love to use charcoal and whitening toothpaste on alternating days to keep my teeth looking and feeling their best. You can check out our toothpaste and all of our products at wellnesse.com.

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But I know you also have a lot of other resources available. And you have been talking about this for a very long time and explaining this. Where else can people find you online?

Donna: Well, I think first start off by coming to the website and signing up for the newsletter, hopefully, and just following the work. I'm gonna start doing more podcasts soon on a more regular basis like you're doing. I love them when I get...I'm always nervous beforehand and then I think, I'm not sure I can do these. But then within afterwards I'm thinking, oh, that was so much fun connecting with people like me, you know, that have some information to share. So if you sign up, you get notified about the podcast.

We have lots and lots of information out there. We used to have a whole lot more but we were one of those companies that got hit by Google and they wiped all of our information out. It was pretty devastating about two years ago, we lost 93% of our traffic overnight. And I've kind of crawled back from there because we had, you know, for example, articles on autism, and they don't want that information out there. But I think that's a good place to start. The website is bodyecologydiet.com.

I'm always kind of reluctant to promote our products, but they're excellent and they're really useful, based on what we really need. For example, and talking about oh, SIBO, for example. Most of the time about 80% of the time, same with urinary tract infections, the microbe that's causing the problem is E.coli.

So we have a product called EcoPhage it is a phage and it kills E.coli, and it's super effective. So many people, including myself have benefited by starting off by taking say, three of those twice a day, like at bedtime and in the morning. And then after a while, you can cut way down to like two or even one couple times a day.

But here's why, because phages go into the bloodstream, they look around for the E.coli, and then they penetrate it. And they, you know, use some of the DNA that the E.coli has, and they make more of it. And then they burst open the cell and now they're everywhere in the bloodstream. And then they're attacking other E.coli. So before long, like a week or so on a high dose you've got all these E.coli and they're doing that job.

But I really think phages are some...well, they're all different, they kill different things. But I think in this day and age, yeah, phages that kill E.coli are a super great tool. Anyway, we do have products that are all about healing the gut, you know, adding that ecosystem in place, we have the starter you know, too, so.

Katie: Awesome. I'll put links to that as well so people can find them directly. And a couple last wrap-up questions. The first being if there is a book or a number of books that have profoundly influenced your life? And if so, what they are and why?

Donna: There isn't one. I hate to say it. I wish I could come up with one because so many great books coming out all the time and some of them I feel like well, I already know that. But no there's not just one I think there are certain fields like anything about the gut particularly yeast and so on I'm gonna read that. There's just a lot of good ones out there, there's a plethora of them.

I think that's a problem for authors is there are so many, how can...? People they're overwhelmed by them. Which is why I think listening to podcasts is fantastic even though I'm working on two books myself. I think podcasts are a great way to learn. And that's why I'm writing a book I'm not reading scientific books for pleasure I'm learning so I can help others.

Katie: I totally understand that. And lastly, any parting advice for the listeners could be related to this, everything we've talked about or totally unrelated?

Donna: Oh, gosh, if we could just get the message out to young parents, parents to be that autism is preventable. It is. I would love for them to know how simple it is to do that and how important it is to do that. It literally puts a baby on a course that they're happy and healthy for the rest of their lives. And we prevent so much heartache, especially for the child but so many parents end up divorcing over this. We need to be focusing more on our children. They're our future everybody knows that but they're really in trouble and they really need our help.

So I would say that, please learn about bringing healthy babies into the world, and what you have to do as soon as they get here. And what you do in the womb, you know, when I was studying child development in Georgia years ago, there wasn't a whole lot about prenatal information but I was super interested in that. I would dig up anything I could find, and so now there's a lot.

And so much happens in the womb. So much about like, oh my gosh, even the way the baby looks and the way their brain develops, and everything. So we need for mothers to be...even if the government, you know, gives kind of like a leave of absence to women during that time that they're pregnant or about to get pregnant even beforehand, you know, for getting ready. And then during the pregnancy really focus on taking care of the baby, getting lots of information, lots of support, it would change the world so much.

What a difference we could make, in my opinion, in crime if we taught all mothers just like part of our culture that we put priorities on creating healthy babies, happy ones, smart ones. Ones that have solutions to the problems in the world today.

Katie: I think that's a perfect place to wrap up. And definitely a recurring theme from the physical side, too. I've had people on to talk about the generational trauma and the mental-emotional side of that as well. And I think you're right, anything we can do that supports mothers and supports children, it has those positive ripples throughout all of society. And for that reason, I'm so grateful for the work you're doing. And thank you for being here today and for educating us.

Donna: Thank you for having me.

Katie: Oh, of course, it was a pleasure. And thanks as always to all of you for listening and sharing your most valuable resources, your time, your energy, and your attention with us today, we're both 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.