

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

Healthy Moms Podcast

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

Episode 92: A Holistic Pediatrician Talks Ear
Infections, Fevers, & Vaccines

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

Katie: Do you love the taste and the benefits of bone broth but don't love how time consuming it is to make? With the time you spend sourcing the best ingredients and then simmering it for hours on end on the stove. Kettle and Fire solves that problem with their bone broth. So they use only bones from 100% grass-fed pasture raised cattle that are never given hormones and antibiotics. It's also unique because they focus on bones that are especially high in collagen, which is one of the healthiest things you can put in your body. Another great thing about them is that they use really eco-friendly minimal packaging and their bone broth is non-perishable. So unlike many bone broths on the market, it ships without the need for refrigeration, which is also much more eco-friendly. It is available in many stores, so definitely check your local area. But if it's not, like it isn't for me, you can order it online and have it shipped to your door, which is what I do. So to check it out and to find out more about why their bone broth is so wonderful, go to kettleandfire.com/wellnessmama

This episode is sponsored by Plant Therapy. There are so many options out there when it comes to essential oils and I've used a lot of them over the years. Now I most often turn to Plant Therapy because they have a large assortment of organic oils and a whole lot of kid-safe blends and they also have really good prices. The cool thing is their oils have no additives or synthetic ingredients like a lot of oils do. And they publish their testing results for all of their oils so you can verify the quality. I've talked a lot about the safe use of essential oils and their kid-safe blends are formulated by Robert Tisserand, who is largely considered one of the foremost experts in essential oil safety, so I feel I can trust him. If you want to check them out, especially right now they're running some big sales that are changing daily. Go to wellnessmama.com/go/oils to get all the current discounts.

Katie: Hi and welcome to "The Healthy Moms Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and I'm here today with holistic doctor, Dr. Elisa Song, who's a holistic pediatrician and a pediatric functional medicine expert, and she's a mom of two. She has an integrated pediatric practice called Whole Family Wellness. I'll link to that in the show notes. And she's helped thousands of kids get to the root cause of their health concerns and helped their parents have peace of mind about the things that are bothering their kids. She's really knowledgeable about all the traditional problems of childhood, but also about homeopathy, and acupuncture, and herbal medicine, and essential oils, and she's worked with everything from little things like colds to ear infections up to asthma, eczema, autism. The list goes on. She's awesome. She's an incredible resource. And I'm excited to chat today. Dr. Song, welcome.

Elisa: Thank you, Katie. I'm so honored. I have to say that you are really, in my mind, the original holistic mama. And, you know, getting the word out there to all the mamas out there, really around the world who need your information. It's been really inspiring to watch your work. And I'm so glad and so thrilled to be able to share information with your audience today.

Katie: Oh, you're so kind. I think it's gonna be an amazing interview because I get so many questions from parents, and I can say even in my own area, it's really difficult to find a pediatrician who is even a teeny bit open to anything that's not the mainstream, much less who's knowledgeable about it. And I think a lot of parents feel a friction with their pediatrician, especially if they choose more natural remedies or those kind of options. And so, as a pediatrician, you actually embrace these methods. And I'd love to really jump into some of the common childhood problems and get your approach to them.

Elisa: Yeah, of course. You know, and I absolutely hear you. I mean, even where I am in the San Francisco Bay Area, it's hard to find an open-minded pediatrician or one who is just willing to listen and hear what parents want and how they would like to proceed. Especially because for the most part, when kids come to the office, it's not an emergency. We have a lot of leeway to really individualize care. So I am hoping that, you know, with

information that you share in your podcast, and on your blog site, and the blog that I created for parents, Healthy Kids Happy Kids, that we'll really be to reach more parents and realize, you know what, there's so much they can do naturally and trust that they're not harming their kids and they're actually helping their kids to thrive and get healthier.

Katie: Yeah, I was checking out your blog earlier today, and I will link to several of the articles there in the show notes because you have some great resources. I think that's the big thing that you hit on the head is just having the peace of mind. I think every parent, we have that deep-seated fear that we're gonna somehow ruin our children, especially if it's any kind of a health problem. There's definitely an urgency that every parent has to wanna fix it, of course. And I think like you have an amazing balanced approach to this. And like you said, if there's a true emergency, you're in the emergency room, you're not in a pediatrician's office. So there is time. So I'd love to start with the most controversial one, at least on my blog, which is the fever. So I have a blog post about why I don't really treat a fever, and I have taken so much heat for that. Everything from people telling me, like, it's basically child abuse that I don't give my kids Tylenol, and I would love to hear from the science side and from your side, working with parents, how do you approach this and what are your guidelines?

Elisa: Yeah, you know, I thank you for bringing that up because fever phobia is rampant. It's rampant not just among parents but among practitioners. You know, most physicians, nurses, you know, health care practitioners do not really understand what fever is and what it does for the body. And you say the word fever and you're just afraid and you wanna give the Tylenol or the Motrin, right? And so I actually wrote an e-book just on this. This is my first e-book that I wrote. It's a free eBook for everyone if they would like because parents don't know what to do, and they're afraid, and they're not getting the advice that they need from the advice nurse or their pediatrician. So the first thing to know is that fever is truly our body's natural response to infection and inflammation. It's really, it's how our body helps fight infections. And when you think about it, when we're hot, you know, let's say it's 100 degrees outside, what happens to us? We slow down, right? So in very simplistic terms, when our blood warms up and our body warms up, it slows down the bugs so that our immune system can actually fight them better.

And the other thing that I like about a fever, which this is something that not all parents like, but it slows your kid down. You know, when you have a fever and when you're sick, you should not be running around acting "normal," right? You shouldn't be jumping on the trampoline, you know, playing on the scooter with your friends. You should be a couch potato. And when you're sick it's okay to be a couch potato and let your body do its thing. So I talked to parents about really when we bring fevers down artificially with things like Tylenol or Ibuprofen, there are studies that show that it actually prolongs the duration of your child's illness. So you may temporarily be helping them to feel better but you're not helping them to fight that infection.

And one of the questions I get is, "Well, what's too high," right? "When is a fever too high." And what I like parents to do is step back and look at your child and really look at how they're acting because there are some children who at a 104, they are running around happy, eating and drinking and you can barely tell until you put your hand on the forehead that they're burning up, whereas other kids at 100.3 are on the couch, they're listless, they're moaning, they're, you know, they're not acting, you know, themselves, they're not acting appropriately, I should say. Not that I want them back themselves but act appropriately. And that child with the 100.3 I'm much more worried about than that child with the 104. So, you know, if we can just sit back and realize this is our body's natural response, it's helpful for our kids, we can use our natural medicines toolkit to help them recover faster and actually help them fight the infection faster, and in doing that, that can help bring down the fever, but it's not gonna artificially shut down their fever response. Does that make sense?

Katie: That makes total sense. That's kinda been my approach as well. Just intuitively. I feel like in so many things in life the body has, for a reason, and I feel like a lot of modern medicine, there are so many benefits obviously. And if you are in a car accident, I think we're in the best place you can be, but I think in that like desire to help in that...that I think every doctor has that maybe we like over treat sometimes. And I think that's a good metric is just letting the body run its course and looking at your own child because like you said, I know

febrile seizures are a big concern for a lot of parents. And maybe there are kids who get that at a very low temperature, but I've seen my kids with 104 and they're fine. So...

Elisa: That's right.

Katie: ... So I don't care and I don't worry and that's a great metric, just to look at the child. What about febrile seizures? Can we touch on those for a second? Because that's another...

Elisa: Yes.

Katie: ...question I get quite a bit.

Elisa: Yeah, febrile seizures are another, you know, they're kind of a distinct concern because for those kids who have had febrile seizures, and their parents have witnessed that, that is one of the most frightening things you can go through. And I completely understand in that case the need to really keep fevers under control. And with febrile seizures, it's really interesting that it's really not so much the height of the fever but how quickly the fever rises. And many parents will say, "You know what? They'll go from 98.6 to 103 in 10 minutes," right? And it just ramps up so quickly that they wanna be on top of the fever really early on. And, you know, I would say if you have a child with a febrile seizure, do everything you can to keep them comfortable and keep them cooler. And if that means giving them Tylenol or Ibuprofen, that's okay, but, you know, if you use some of our natural medicines, then we can help to keep the fever down. And in fact, there are some homeopathic medicines like Belladonna or Stramonium. These are on homeopathic dilution that can be helpful in preventing febrile seizures. So I layer those in as well. It's not an either-or thing.

You know, when you go the "natural route," it doesn't mean that you're completely throwing out conventional medicine. You know, that's where the term integrative pediatrics and integrative medicine is really important because we're using the best of both worlds to really treat our children in the best way that we can and with the tools that we can. And, you know, when I mentioned about fevers not being dangerous, there are, you know, for normal "neurologically intact children," the fever is not gonna get too high, but there are some warning signs that I do tell parents to really bring your kids to the doc and make sure they're okay. And that's, you know, for most viral, and really for most viral infections that cause fevers, the fever shouldn't last for more than four or five days. If you're going on a week of fever, I'd like to check it out just to make sure there's not a silent urinary tract infection or something else going on. You know, the younger you are, your baby is three months or younger, maybe even six months or younger, your immune system is just not mature enough sometimes to contain that infection. So not that there's something serious going on if there have a fever but get it checked out and you know, the biggest concern with fever is dehydration in kids. So watching their urine output. Kids, when they are getting dehydrated, you wanna make sure that they are having some urine at least every six to eight hours. They might not be having a really full wet diaper but we want them to have some pee. That's a good marker that you're getting enough fluids in. And, you know, the biggest thing that parents will tell me is, "Well, they're just lethargic." And I want to know what that means because lethargic is a term that in pediatrician's minds really puts up red flags that there could be meningitis, right? That there could be something really serious. And lethargic means really difficult to arouse or unarousable laying on the couch. It doesn't mean tired, it doesn't mean, you know, just wanting to sleep a little more or cuddle a little more or just, you know, be a couch potato and watch, you know, some shows on TV. It really means confusion, difficulty arousing, difficulty waking up. And so if that's going on, then I want that child to be seen right away. But otherwise, you know, apart from, you know, if your child has a febrile seizure, and even if they do, there are some things that we can do from that natural standpoint to help their body fight their infection and get over their illness faster without artificially bringing down the fever.

My other concern with Tylenol just in particular is that Tylenol, it reduces the levels of a compound called glutathione in our body, and glutathione is really critical as an antioxidant, as an anti-inflammatory, as a detoxification support. And when our levels of glutathione are depleted, we have a lower capacity to handle infections and fever. So if parents are going to use fever reducers, and my choice is typically Ibuprofen, you

know, Advil or Motrin because that's not gonna have the same effect on glutathione. And the reason that I would bring down a fever would really be if your child is so uncomfortable that they're not able to drink as well because hydration is key, or if they're so uncomfortable that they're not able to sleep soundly because sleep trumps everything when you're sick, right? You know, you should really go to sleep and let your body heal and recover. So those are the two reasons that I consider treating with a fever reducer. Otherwise, I still, even at that point, even if my child is tossing and turning and uncomfortable in bed, I definitely try the homeopathics and the herbal medicines and acupressure first.

Katie: Yeah, that's really great information. I think that'll help a lot of people just have peace of mind to let the body do its thing in most cases. Another thing I get a lot of questions about is earaches. And we haven't had very many of these with our kids. And my approach is usually wait-and-see on these because they typically resolve, and we've never had to give a child antibiotics for this, but what's your take on earaches? Obviously, it's a pretty common childhood thing.

Elisa: Yes, yup.

Katie: I've also read, like, antibiotics aren't probably even effective for most earaches. So, how do you handle those?

Elisa: Well, you know, with earaches, what we want to know, understand, is that, you know, a good percentage, you know, probably 40%, 50% are viral, you know, another 40% are bacterial, but even bacterial ear infections can resolve on their own. And the American Academy of Pediatrics at this point recommends a kind of wait-and-watch approach for low-risk kids. And low-risk kids are really gonna be those kids between six months and two years of age who don't have a severe illness and their diagnosis is not clear because sometimes you look in the ear and it's a little pink or it's a little cloudy but it's not clear whether it's a raging ear infection. Or those kids are over two years of age and don't have severe illness or have an uncertain diagnosis. So when you're waiting and watching though, you know, for those two days three days, you know, waiting for your kids to, you know, see if they get better, in the meantime they're in pain, right? And they do have inflammation, and many of them have a fever. And so we want to use our natural medicines toolkit to see, well, can we get them to recover from that ear infection faster.

And I have to say, in the past, you know, 12 years now that I've had this holistic integrative pediatric practice, I can probably count on, you know, the fingers of both hands how many times I've had to prescribe antibiotics for ear infections. Prior to that, in my conventional practice, it was probably a daily occurrence. You know, earaches are the number one reason why kids go to see the doctor. And when you have that integrative toolkit and you have antibiotics as a backup, we know that we can really help our kids recover. And I can go over some of those natural medicines if you would like to for parents who have kids who have frequent ear infections. And, of course, along with that, kids often will get a fever. So many of the natural remedies overlap with the fever remedies.

Katie: Yeah, I'd love to. Let's delve into that a little bit.

Elisa: Okay, so one of the first things is garlic ear oil, right? Garlic has great anti-inflammatory and anti-infective antimicrobial properties, meaning that they're going to, garlic is going to kill not just viruses but also bacteria. And you can make a garlic ear oil. I know that you have, you know, a great resource on how to make your home garlic ear oil. If you're not comfortable and you're not kind of a DIY kind of person, which I wish I were more, but I try but I'm not, but there are companies, herbal companies out there that are very reputable that make garlic mullein ear drops that often has some other ingredients like St. John's Wort in them. And there's a combination of herbs that have been found in this one particular study to actually be more effective than antibiotics in getting kids over their ear infection and resolving the pain, which is fascinating, right? We know that, you know, many antibiotics don't work, that there is antibiotic resistance that kids often will be on one antibiotic like amoxicillin, it doesn't work then they put on Augmentin, and that doesn't work in the put on Omnicef, and you're on this antibiotic train. And so, you know, when we can use herbal medicines like the

garlic ear drops and know that they can work even better than antibiotics, that's amazing.

And then, you know, homeopathic medicines, I love homeopathy. You know, homeopathy is one of the areas of holistic medicine that I think people have the most difficulty wrapping their head around because it's the idea of the substance that's so dilute that there's not any of that original substance, but it helps to move the body in that direction of healing, and you're using a substance that in kind of natural form, create symptoms that you're trying to heal. So it's really hard to get your mind around that. I'm here in Silicon Valley, a lot of, you know, kind of engineering scientific minds that question, however, it is evidence-based. There is some really good evidence that homeopathic medicines can work for fevers and flus and ear infections and trauma and even chronic illnesses. And so, for low-grade fever and for ear infections, the number one homeopathic medicine is Ferrum Phosphoricum. I did write a blog post on some of these medicines so when Katie links to the blog post, you can look that up to know how to spell that. But Ferrum Phosphoricum is basically the homeopathic anti-inflammatory. It targets the Eustachian tube, right, your ear canal to help with the fluid drainage that's causing pain and that's causing inflammation. And so that's your go-to for ear infections and your go-to for low-grade fevers.

And then there are herbal remedies like elderberry syrup. And I know you have a blog post on how to make elderberry syrup. Elderberry syrup is great. It's antiviral. It helps to bring down fevers. In fact, for flus, they found that elderberry syrup was effective in killing the h1n1 flu virus, that was that, you know, the big scare years ago. So elderberry syrup is a great herbal formula to give to your children when they have an earache or when they have a fever.

And then I love, love, love acupressure and incorporating essential oils with acupressure because this is something that you can do as a mama or a papa to really, you know, give your child that loving touch but in a really healing way. And for ear infections, probably the most important point to use is something called large intestine 4. And that, if you look at your hands and there's a web space between your index finger and your thumb, right in between in that meaty part of your hands is large intestine 4. And when you're doing acupressure, you wanna just rub firmly but gently. It might be tender because when we need acupressure when we're sick, those points that we need the most can be very tender, but you're just massaging gently. And you can rub in things like peppermint essential oil if your child has a fever because that's cooling to the body, or lavender essential oil because it has anti-inflammatory properties, and it's really soothing and calming and helps with the anxiety that goes along with pain. So all of these you can use for fever or for earaches.

And then, you know, if your child does end up needing antibiotics, it's really not the end of the world. I know I talk a ton about how important the gut microbiome is to our health, to our kids' health, and that all health really does start in the gut whether it's your immune health or your hormone health or your neurologic health, but when you use antibiotics if it's needed, we can get our gut microbiome back. It's just really important to be mindful then of eating wholesome healthy foods full of phytonutrients to support our gut lining, taking extra probiotics, and really trying to get in as much of these fermented foods as possible to maintain our gut health.

Katie: Those are great tips. So what about parents...I have several friends like this who their child has recurring ear infections, and they have tried treatment with the antibiotics and they seem to still come back. Can there be deeper causes, or what do you look for in those cases?

Elisa: Yeah, so definitely. I see a lot of kids in my practice who have recurrent ear infections, and either they're heading to ear tubes or they have ear tubes and they're still getting ear infections, right? Because ear tubes are no guarantee that you're not gonna get ear infections, unfortunately. So, you know, there's a few different ways that I approach that. And that's really similar to how I approach any chronic condition, whether it's something like chronic ear infections, or it's something like an autoimmune illness, or, you know, autism, and the foundations are the same. The first thing, though, of course, most kids the trigger for the ear infections are gonna be a cold or flu. And so, really figure out how to boost your child's immune system naturally is very important. And that means, again, really cleaning up their diet. One of the first things with ear infections, and asthma, and any of those kind of phlegm producing conditions is the dairy. You gotta get off dairy.

And I really and truly, you know, believe and have seen in my practice the power of just eliminating dairy. It may just be for the cold and flu season, it may be for longer while we're healing that child's gotten healing their immune system. But really getting out the dairy and identifying any other foods that are irritating to that child's immune system, to that child's gut, which we can do through an elimination diet, or there's various functional medicine tests that can be done.

And I mentioned, really the importance of eating whole foods, unprocessed foods as much as possible, eating organically. Really, when we have those foods with artificial dyes and flavors and pesticides, like glyphosate or Roundup, it's not just that it's, you know, "Bad for your body," it really is bad for your body, it really is bad for your brain and for your immune system. And some kids can tolerate a little bit here and there but some kids can't tolerate any. So while your child is sick, I would say just as clean as possible.

And then there's, you know, supplements that I will recommend to families for those children who are needing that additional immune support. Probiotics are really key. There are two strains that have been studied to really reduce the incidence of colds and fevers and flus during the cold and flu season. And there are several manufacturers like Metagenics that I trust and value. They have a children's chewable probiotic that has those two strains in it. So during the cold and flu season, I'll get my own kids and the kids at my practice on that probiotic in addition to a broad spectrum probiotic to get in all of those different kinds of lactobacillus and bifidobacterium species that support our, many different functions in our body.

Vitamin D is critical. And, you know, even here in sunny California in the middle of the summer when I measure kids' vitamin D levels and they've been out all day in the sun, you know, playing soccer or running around, many many kids are still either insufficient or outright deficient in the vitamin D levels. So I do like to supplement with vitamin D even in the summertime, especially for those kids who are getting sick during the summer or have chronic health concerns. And my goal is to keep their 25 hydroxy vitamin D levels between about 60 and 80. And this is really important during pregnancy for those Mamas, you know, who are getting their blood work done. You know, please ask your OBs to check your vitamin D levels. And don't just take in it's normal at face value. Ask for the level because if it's a 25, that might be considered normal, but that's certainly not optimal for brain health, for your baby, and for yourself, for mood support, and for hormone supports.

And then the other supplements that I do like to use to boost immune system, of course, fish oils. Cod liver oil has vitamin D in it so you can use cod liver oil or another fish oil. If you have eczema or asthma, I like to use a 3-6-9 Blend. And there is a natural sugar from the bark of the larch tree called Arabinogalactan. It's a long word but that really helps to boost our immune system in a significant way as our first line of defense, these natural killer cells, you know, our first line of defense against any infection. And then finally, nasal irrigation. Whether you use a Neti Pot, whether you use a nasal spray like Xlear, clearing out your nose every day to clear out those viruses that are trying to take hold of your nose and in your ear canal before they can take hold and become a full-blown infection can go a long way in preventing your child from getting sick and you as well. You know, during the winter time, I think daily nasal irrigation after school, after a birthday party, after a plane ride, you know, at the end of the day, every time you've had any exposure that could lead to an illness. You know, if parents who say, okay every time they go to a birthday party the next two days later, it's like clockwork. Their kid is sick with a cold, and then they get another ear infection. Well, clear out their nose that night and then see if you can break that cycle.

So that's sort of, you know, the ways to boost your immune system, but then we have, well, you know, these other ways that we need to identify what's going on. What's wrong? Where's the imbalance? Why is my child getting sick so often? Why are they getting infections so often? Why are they getting asthma attacks so frequently? And when we think about chronic conditions like that, I did mention before, we have to start in the gut. And that's looking to see, do they have dysbiosis? Do they have abnormal levels of probiotics, not enough or do they have too many, you know, abnormal bacteria or yeast or parasites? And this can lead to, you know, this gut dysbiosis can lead to immune system dysregulation that then really creates an immune imbalance that sets us down this path of whatever illness our child is facing, whether it's an autoimmune illness or whether it's

chronic ear infections.

And then, when we have that gut dysregulation, we also are more at risk for having something called a leaky gut or intestinal permeability where we can develop food sensitivities to virtually any food that we're eating. And when we're in that state of having a leaky gut, those foods that were sensitive to can perpetuate, can keep this inflammation in our body and this immune dysregulation going. So we do wanna identify what those foods are. And once we do, there's something called the 5-R Program which can get your child 70%, 80% percent on the way to healing. And, you know, that 5-R Program includes removing, right? The first R is removing anything that's irritating to your gut or to your immune system like those abnormal bugs I mentioned before, or any food sensitivities. The next R is repairing that gut lining with things like omega-3 essential fatty acids. And there's an amino acid called glutamine that repairs the gut lining. The next R is replacing what's missing in your gut, like digestive enzymes. The fourth R is reinoculating, repopulating, and colonizing your gut with all those good probiotics. And then the fifth R is rebalancing, you know, restoring your health. And this is, in my mind, as I really, you know, going into my second decade as a holistic pediatrician, find to be the most important step. But one that we, as physicians, even functional medicine docs and holistic docs have the least knowledge about how to help our kids. And this is reducing stress, you know, vitalizing our kids, you know, helping them get a really good night's sleep, helping them manage their anxieties. And, you know, that, you know, I wrote a whole blog post on just that because we need that to really maintain our health.

And then finally, you know, for specific conditions like eczema, asthma, anxiety, constipation, reflux, we have individualized treatments that are needed as well. So we can go into any of those if you'd like to, but, you know, for chronic conditions like ear infections, we wanna start with the gut and with a 5-R Program and really healing their gut dysbiosis.

Katie: Those are such great tips, and I love what you said about vitamin D to have like a hard metric to look for because I had an experience personally. They tested my vitamin D when I was in the early stages of trying to figure out what was wrong, and it ended up being thyroid problems, but my levels were in the 20s. And they're like, "Oh, nope. Totally normal." And when I finally saw a holistic doctor, he was like, "Whoa, no. You are so deficient."

Elisa: Yes.

Katie: And with my genetic mutations, which I'm assuming a lot of my children probably have as well, I've found that I have to both get sunlight and takes supplemental vitamin D to get in that 60 to 80 range, and in bigger doses than I would have thought I would. So I think you're absolutely right on that, like, testing is key, and that seems to make a huge, huge difference. Even just that on, like, warding off the little colds or flus that come with the winter, that's made a big difference for us.

Katie: Do you love the taste and the benefits of bone broth but don't love how time consuming it is to make? With the time you spend sourcing the best ingredients and then simmering it for hours on end on the stove. Kettle and Fire solves that problem with their bone broth. So they use only bones from 100% grass-fed pasture raised cattle that are never given hormones and antibiotics. It's also unique because they focus on bones that are especially high in collagen, which is one of the healthiest things you can put in your body. Another great thing about them is that they use really eco-friendly minimal packaging and their bone both is non-perishable. So unlike many bone broths on the market, it ships without the need for refrigeration, which is also much more eco-friendly. It is available in many stores, so definitely check your local area. But if it's not, like it isn't for me, you can order it online and have it shipped to your door, which is what I do. So to check it out and to find out more about why their bone broth is so wonderful, go to kettleandfire.com/wellnessmama

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large assortment of organic oils and a whole lot of kid-safe blends and they also have really good prices. The cool thing is their oils have no additives or synthetic ingredients like a lot of oils do. And they publish their testing results for all of their oils so you can verify the quality. I've talked a lot about the safe use of essential oils and their kid-safe blends are formulated by Robert Tisserand, who is largely considered one of the foremost experts in essential oil safety, so I feel I can trust him. If you want to check them out, especially right now they're running some big sales that are changing daily. Go to wellnessmama.com/go/oils to get all the current discounts.

Katie: And all these remedies are great. I love to go a little deeper on colds and flu, though, because we're not really in that season right now, but when this episode airs, we will be. And I feel like that's one of the hardest things as a parent is when your kid is sick, and it is something like the cold, and there's no remedy that's gonna fix it, in conventional medicine anyway, but just letting the body do its thing. So how do you approach cold and flu? You've already shared a lot of remedies, but are there any other things you offer for parents, or...and also I'd love to hear your thoughts on the flu shot if it's not too controversial.

Elisa: Yeah, you know. I think that vaccines in general, right? I mean, we just all have such a, kind of visceral, emotional response, whatever our belief systems are. And, you know, when you go to my website, I did write this past winter a three-part blog series on flu and flu shots and, you know, and natural flu treatments because it's such an important issue. And, you know, we're inundated in the media, you know, starting in September, right, as soon as our kids go back to school. The flu seasons are right around the corner. Get your flu shot. People die from the flu. It's really dangerous, you know. And some people do get very very sick from the flu. But it's really important to remember that for the most part, for the most part, you know, people, kids, adults with the flu don't get, you know, deadly ill. And there are so many ways we can really keep healthy through the flu season and prevent ourselves from getting sick.

What's really interesting to note is that the studies about the effectiveness of the flu vaccine are really all over the place, and there's not great evidence to support that the flu shot actually helps to reduce the incidence of flu in any given season or to prevent the flu in yourself. And, of course, you know, the flu shot used to have Thimerosal in it, which is the mercury preservative. The flu shot doesn't have Thimerosal anymore, but just like any vaccine, it's going to have other ingredients like Formaldehyde, and Aluminum, MSG, things that, you know, if you really think about what we wanna put into our bodies and we wanna put into our kids' bodies, really only the best ingredients to nurture them and help them thrive, these ingredients are not the most desirable. So there are some high-risk kids and adults that, you know, I would consider the flu vaccine for. These are, you know, maybe kids with congenital heart disease, or immunocompromised, or other serious chronic health concern. But for the most part, if you are healthy, and you don't have a serious chronic illness, the flu itself is going to be something that your body can weather. And we have so many great natural flu treatments.

So I do tell parents the decision to vaccinate or not vaccinate your child with the flu shot or with any other vaccine is truly, in my mind, the parent's right to decide. And it's really, you know, it must be an informed decision and a partnership with your physician, or your family physician, or your pediatrician. Unfortunately, most parents don't feel like they have that partnership with their physician. And I absolutely feel for them because that first decision that you have to make in the hospital when your baby's born with the Hep B vaccine or at the two months checkup when you're, you know, doctor is saying that your child should get four or five shots, that's gonna be one of the most difficult decisions you will ever have to make for your child. And, you know, hopefully, with some of the vaccine series that have come at the summit, that have come out, parents can get a little bit more informed.

So that being said, whether or not you have decided to give your child the flu vaccine...bottom line, if your child or you get the flu, because you can still get the flu if you've gotten the flu shot, what you want to do is make sure that, you know, you have some things at home, because if you have the flu, last thing you wanna do is go to Whole Foods and buy some of your remedies. But, you know, stock up on this homeopathic flu remedy

called Oscillococcinum during the winter season, you'll see it at every, you know, Whole Foods at the checkout stand, you know, in little boxes, this Oscillococcinum, there are some good studies showing that it can actually help reduce the duration of your flu and reduce your symptoms. So the way you take it, it comes in little vials, they're different than the other homeopathic medicines that come in bigger tubes, each dose, one dose is one vial, and you basically just empty the entire vial. It's a little tiny sprinkles. It tastes like sugar. Kids love them. You empty that one vial into your mouth and you suck on all the pellets until they're dissolved. And you take one vial every maybe six to eight hours, just three times for three doses. And then you wanna start some of your antiviral herbal remedies, like elderberry syrup that we already mentioned. There is an herbal formula called Umcka, U-M-C-K-A, Umcka Cold Care Syrup that you can easily find that also, is very good at treating colds and upper respiratory infections and flus. I love a Chinese formula, an herbal formula for kids called Windbreaker, but that might be a little bit harder to find depending on where you are.

And then in terms of other vitamins, increasing vitamin C for our antioxidant support, anti-inflammatories support. The thing to know when we have a cold or flu is that it's really, it's not the bug itself that's making us feel terrible. It's the free radicals, right? The oxidative stress that's being created in our body that's making us feel achy and, you know, brain foggy and, you know, chilled and uncomfortable. And so if we have tons of antioxidants on board, we're gonna reduce how badly we feel. And our major antioxidant it's gonna be vitamin C. And, of course, all those colorful fruits and vegetables that we wanna really make sure we're getting when we're sick. Vitamin D, really important. You can even up your dose of vitamin D a little bit. Making sure that you're sleeping as well as you can, staying hydrated with really nourishing fluids, not just water but things like bone broth, a chamomile tea, lemon balm tea, elderberry tea. And trying to really eat warm, easy-to-digest food so your digestive tract is not taking any extra energy. Your energy is reserved for your immune system.

And then acupressure points. I mentioned large intestine 4, but then large intestine 11, really important. That's if you bend your arm, large intestine 11 is at the outer edge of your elbow crease. And so really massaging that point, and again, using your essential oils like lavender that's anti-inflammatory and calming, peppermint that's gonna be cooling if you're really hot and sweaty with your fever. Cinnamon is another essential oil that you can use if you're chilled because it warms up your body a little bit if you're having shivers and chills. Time essential oil is great if you have a ton of mucus, right, you know, and you're just, really, your kids are snotty, and their ears are full, and their nose is constantly dripping, and their lungs sound kind of wet, then time essential oil helps to break up that mucus. So there's a ton that we can do to really help you get over your flu faster. And, again, all those immune supports I mentioned before for your kids who are getting those to repeat your infections, you wanna do all of those during the cold and flu season to really try to keep yourself from getting the flu.

Katie: I'm over here taking notes to make sure I put all this in the show notes. This is awesome. I know other things that parents, when I said I was interviewing you, they wanted to know is, what about eczema and asthma? And I linked those together because I kind of actually consider at least how I would approach them the same, but obviously you have the medical background. So what about more chronic issues like that? I know that, especially eczema can be horrible for children. And parents are really desperate for a solution. So how do you approach those?

Elisa: Yeah, so eczema and asthma. You know, you're absolutely right, Katie, to lump them together because they are in this category of illnesses called atopic illnesses. Eczema, asthma, and allergies. And, you know, we are now considering eczema and asthma to be autoimmune conditions. So this rise in autoimmunity in kids is alarming to me. I am seeing, you know, toddlers, infants being diagnosed with autoimmune illness, not just eczema and asthma but things like Crohn's disease, and juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. So we need to really step back, you know, all of us as holistic mamas, we need to really be our kids' best advocates, not just in our homes, but really getting out there and demanding that all this artificial junk is taken out of our kids' foods. That in our school, you know, lunch programs are healthier and nourishing for our kids. You know, that the Environmental Protection Agency continues to protect our kids' food sources and their water sources. So, you know, that's a much larger issue. But I think, you know, what's going on with our kids is that we as a society are not protecting our kids, and we're not understanding how to keep our kids healthy and thriving.

And so, you know, when we go back to things like eczema that sometimes kids are literally born with, I have parents saying they came out scaly and itchy, and sometimes it starts around six months of age when they're starting solids, but then we typically see in kids with eczema that they progress then on to, the eczema gets better when they're a toddler, but then they start to wheeze, and then they start to have asthma, and then they start to have hay fever. And so it's this atopic march that we really wanna halt. And with this atopic march, it does start, really if you have the opportunity, if you have a child with eczema or asthma or allergies, and you're going to have a second child or a third child, you wanna start with you. You know, as you as your mama because if your gut health is strong and your immune health is strong, you're going to give that maybe the best chance to really have a functional immune system and not become dysregulated. And that includes, that really really includes getting moms to make sure their gut is healthy before they get pregnant if possible.

We found that a certain probiotic called *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, when given to moms during pregnancy, their third trimester, and during the duration of nursing can significantly reduce that child's risk for developing eczema and asthma. So if you have a family history of eczema and asthma, then absolutely take probiotics, and make sure that that probiotic has that *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* in it. Now, once your child has eczema or has asthma, what you wanna do, as I mentioned before, is get to the root cause of what's going on. Find the root imbalances. That's what functional medicine is all about. And I would say take it a step further and really not just look into functional medicine, but a truly holistic approach because there's never just one approach that works for every single child. It must be individualized. There's no one size fits all approach. But it does start with the gut, looking for that gut dysbiosis. And there are specialized functional stool tests that a functional medicine practitioner can help you with that look not just at, you know, do you have high levels of really bad bacteria like, you know, salmonella or really bad *E.coli* but helps to break down all of the different low levels of bacteria that make up your gut microbiome, and looking at how well you're digesting food, absorbing your nutrients, whether or not there's inflammation in your gut.

And then, of course, identifying food sensitivities. For eczema asthma, the biggest triggers are going to be gluten, dairy, eggs, I have found corn to be a trigger, citrus can be a trigger, but as I mentioned before when you have a leaky gut, you can be sensitive to any food that you're eating the most of. So if your child is, you know, a huge sun butter addict and, you know, and eating sun butter and jelly sandwiches every single day, they might be and probably will be sensitive to sun butter. And these are different than, you know, the anaphylactic peanut allergies that we hear about and unfortunately are increasing. Food sensitivities are not life-threatening. They're more subtle. They cause kind of a low-grade simmering fire, the simmering, you know, the simmering embers. They're just continuing to irritate your kid's immune systems. So they're not that obvious. Testing can be really beneficial in helping to guide your elimination diet. And once we know what those foods are, we wanna take those foods away for a minimum of three months while we're doing that 5-R program that I mentioned before for the leaky gut.

I will just take a step back and say, with autoimmune conditions, even if you don't test positive, if your child doesn't test positive for gluten sensitivity or celiac disease, they really do need to get off that gluten while they're healing. It doesn't mean that that gluten sensitivity is gonna be lifelong, but gluten is such an inflammatory food. And it is such an irritant to our gut, into our immune system that what we're trying to heal immune dysfunction and autoimmunity like eczema and asthma, we need to take away gluten. And, you know, nowadays I feel like it is so easy to do relatively. Now I understand if your kids, all they're eating are mac and cheese and pizza, and we need to work into, you know, getting them to expand their diet. And it's not a race. You don't have to eliminate these foods tomorrow, but you just wanna get there. You wanna start introducing substitutes before you take away, for a child, because as a mama, you know, as an adult, I can say, "All right. Tomorrow, everything's out. I'm not doing any more gluten." Not gonna be that easy for your child, but, you know, we just take baby steps, and we always introduce before we take away.

Now, the other things that we need to look at specifically for eczema and asthma, I mentioned inflammation, right? There's likely going to be a lot of oxidative stress. So getting in good antioxidants. And with eczema and asthma in particular, it's gonna be one of the most important antioxidants is gonna be something called

Quercetin. That's Q-U-E-R-C-E-T-I-N, Quercetin. It's really, in a way, a natural antihistamine. It stabilizes the histamine response from our white blood cells when they're exposed to any sort of an allergen. And, you know, we know that allergies can trigger eczema and asthma, and so this really helps to stabilize the trigger for their symptoms and help in it in terms of eczema for the itching, because for parents, it's the itching that's the most horrible. No matter what their skin looks like, your skin can look really clear but these kids are miserable with their itching, and sometimes up all night just scratching themselves until they bleed. So Quercetin, really important to help with that itching.

In terms of eczema specifically, zinc is super important. We look in chronic conditions for nutrient deficiencies as well or insufficiency. So for kids with eczema, zinc is often insufficient, and you need zinc for skin healing. So you can get food sources of zinc like pumpkin seeds and, you know, animal proteins, chicken are gonna have zinc, shellfish if you tolerate shellfish, but, otherwise, supplementing with zinc. Of course, your omega-3 essential fatty acids are important for eczema and asthma, but then there is a beneficial omega-6 called Gamma-linolenic Acid. That's GLA. That's found in borage oil, evening primrose oil, blackcurrant oil. That's really important for eczema and asthma that's found to be very effective and helpful for these atopic diseases.

And then for asthma, we really want to make sure that our kids' magnesium levels are optimized. Magnesium deficiency is widespread in kids and adults. But magnesium relaxes muscles. And when we have asthma, one of the issues is that the muscles around our lung spaces, around our bronchioles spasm too easily in response to allergies or colds or other infections. And so if we have enough magnesium, the muscles around our lungs stay nice, and relaxed, and don't twitch as much when exposed to these triggers. And you can get magnesium from foods, you know, dark chocolate, dark green leafy vegetables. You can take an Epsom salt bath, which I love. In fact, for kids, when they're having an asthma attack, I get them immediately into an Epsom salt bath because it just, right away, calms the lungs down. Not just, you know, the muscles around their lungs, but it also calms them emotionally because anxiety and stress, we know are triggers for eczema and asthma as well.

And then for asthma as well, there was something called glutathione I mentioned before when I was talking about colds and flus. But glutathione has been found to be deficient in the lungs of kids with asthma. And glutathione is not just an important antioxidant but it is also an important mucous reducer. It helps to thin the mucus in the lungs. So you can get glutathione through your Epsom salt baths, interestingly enough because Epsom salts are magnesium sulfate, and the sulfate part of the Epsom salt help your helps your body to make glutathione. And, of course, there are glutathione supplements as well.

And then, you know, the other things that I look at for patients of chronic illnesses like eczema and asthma is really when we look at the family history. If everyone in the family has eczema and asthma, then that points to something called methylation problems. You know, so I look to see, you know, are there genetic mutations that may put this child more at risk for having methylation problems? Do we need to support methylation with things like, you know, methylated B vitamins or methylated folic acid, and really help support their detoxification capacity, and their immune regulation, and their DNA repair? And then, other considerations for chronic conditions are going to be looking at other toxic exposures, like chronic infections that are just simmering under the surface, or things like heavy metals, or mold toxicity which can be an issue for asthma and eczema. And really working with someone who can do gentle detox for kids. Kids do not need very strong detoxification even when they're very sick, you know. Kids, their bodies move so incredibly well. They have it this huge healing capacity that just needs to be kind of, you know, moved gently in the right direction. But some kids do need that detoxification. And so working with a practitioner that can help guide you with that.

And then we have the spiritual emotional piece, which is really key for healing. Our cells really have this innate emotional memory, and if our cells remember that, you know, we're so itchy and scared and anxious at night because of that, or we feel like we can't get enough air in and that's really frightening, the moment we start to have those attacks, our cells just lock in and create even more inflammation. And so if we can reduce that emotional response, and there's so many ways to do that. Kids can absolutely learn meditation and imagery. And they do that in a different way than us. They don't have to sit there with their eyes closed for half an hour

trying to get their mind still. They can do walking meditation. They can tell stories, and that's a form of meditation. There are lots of audio CDs now for kids that, you know, that can help guide them through a very brief meditation that can be age-appropriate starting at, you know, toddler all the way to teenage years.

Aimee Saltzman is a doctor friend of mine who has a workbook series, "Mindfulness Program for Kids and Teenagers." There's a CD called "Dreaming of Ponies" by Lori Light that I love. That's for younger children. There are a series of books called the "What to Do" series that are self-help books for kids that are cognitive behavioral therapy techniques that kids can learn in a really fun way on their own. And the series of workbooks is by a psychologist named Don Huebner, H-U-E-B-N-E-R, and I still, I use her techniques. She has a book called, "What to Do When You Worry Too Much," and I use those techniques because they help me when I'm starting to get stressed. And, you know, I do have a little bit of asthma that flares here and there. And I can tell when I'm getting stressed. My lungs are getting a little tighter. And I just use her techniques. And I use my, you know, Headspace or my Calm app on my phone, which my kids can use as well just to kind of chill out, you know, mellow out, and it immediately helps your lungs to feel more clear. So those are some of the things from a functional medicine standpoint and an integrative standpoint for eczema and asthma that we can use.

And, you know, topically, for eczema, you know, parents wanna know, what can I do, you know, to help my kid's skin is so dry and scaly and itchy or getting infected? Calendula, that's marigold. You can make a calendula salve. You can buy calendula cream or ointment. But calendula has incredible skin healing properties. It helps to heal those cracks and those fissures in your skin. It helps to prevent infection because calendula helps to fight bacteria and yeast and viruses. And we know that many kids with eczema when their skin is broken, they can get bacterial infections. And then Manuka honey. Manuka honey is amazing, especially for staph which we know that kids can get, with eczema can get colonized with on their skin and get infected with easily. So that's a ton of information but, you know, there is a step-wise way that we can approach our kids with eczema, and asthma, and chronic illnesses, and autoimmune conditions. And so it's just for you, mamas listening out there to know there is hope. Your kids can absolutely get healed and get better and thrive. It's just knowing the steps to implement, and really, hopefully finding a practitioner work with you, but hopefully, this podcast give you some ideas on ways to start even at your home right now, even if you don't have access to a functional medicine doc near you.

Katie: I love that. I think everything you have said is very practical and very actionable so I think you're right. This will help a lot of moms even if they can't find a doctor. But hopefully, I feel like we are on the verge of hopefully finding a lot more doctors and practitioners being willing to look at this, especially like you mentioned with the rise in drug-resistant antibiotics like all these things are not working as well as they used to. So perhaps we'll see more of that. But I love that everything you give is very balanced and very actionable. And I'll make sure, I know you have blog posts about quite a few of the things you talked about so make sure we link to those as well. But I know people may want to find out more and learn from you. So where can listeners find you? You have two websites, I believe, but where can they find you to learn more or if they have a question about a specific problem with their child?

Elisa: Yeah, so, you know, to learn more about my integrative approach to various conditions, I started last year a blog site called Healthy Kids Happy Kids, and that's just healthykidshappykids.com. And that's probably the best way to find general information. I'm trying to, you know, really post more information about the things that parents are asking me for. So I am working on an eczema blog post that's coming out soon. I'm working right now in an autism blog post. There's so much that can be done. And then, you know, my Facebook page is actually a great way. I try to post several times a week on some really interesting relevant articles or just new tips. I just posted a tip on homeopathic medicines for sleep. So there are some great tips that I don't necessarily put on the Healthy Kids Happy Kids website. So you can follow me there. You can just find me at, its Dr. Elisa Song, Healthy Kids Happy Kids.

And then my practice website Whole Family Wellness. I'm here in Belmont in Northern California, I'm in the San Francisco Bay Area. And the website is wholefamilywellness.org. And so we, unfortunately, don't do virtual consultations. We do need to see patients in the office for the first visit, and then yearly afterwards. But for

families who are able to do that, we can do follow-up certainly by phone or by Skype. And I have parents coming to me from all over the country, and I even have parents from different parts of the world coming for consultations when their kids are sick and need additional support. But because that's not feasible for every parent, that's why I did so Healthy Kids Happy Kids because I'd love to get all the knowledge that I've learned over these past, you know, 12 years out there to anyone who needs it, and just to get them started and really hopeful that that their kids can heal.

Katie: Yeah, you are such a wealth of information. And I will make sure both of those sites are linked in the show notes as well, but I think even just the information you've provided today is gonna be so helpful to so many people. And I could talk all day to you, you're amazing, but I wanna respect your time. And thank you so much for taking the time, and for being here, and for sharing your approach on all these different childhood issues.

Elisa: Oh, thanks, Katie. This was my pleasure and honor. And thank you for having me on the show.

Katie: Absolutely. We'll have to do around two one day. And thanks to all of you for listening. I'll see you next time on "The Healthy Moms 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.