



968: From Depletion to Thriving: The Step-by-
Step Approach to Wellness for the Whole Family
With Dr. Sheila Kilbane

Child: Welcome to my mommy's podcast!

Katie: This episode is brought to you by NativePath and in particular, something I have been experimenting with and really, really loving lately. And here's what you need to understand. A lot of us think calcium is important for our health, especially for our bones. But is this actually true? Bad news. It turns out maybe not, or at least there's more nuance here.

One of the largest bone health studies ever conducted followed thousands of women taking calcium and oral vitamin D daily, and the results were surprising, but not in the way you would think. They saw no significant reduction in their risk of fractures, and they saw no improved bone density. So all those calcium pills might not be doing what we think, and it turns out they might actually be counterproductive.

But here's where it gets interesting. A brand new study found that women who did one thing every morning consistently for six months gained 7% bone density, which is massive. This is the same amount of bone mass the average person loses over the course of five years after a certain age. So what did they do?

It was not a medication or even a workout. It came down to one simple thing added to their morning routine. And that's why a lot of people, especially people over 50, are making this one simple change and seeing massive results. I'm sure you're probably curious what it is, and it's a particular protein from one of my favorite brands called NativePath.

And they're offering all of you up to 45% off of this, plus free shipping and a free gift. Right now you can visit savewithnativepath.com/wellnessmama to find out what it is and how to implement it and save up to 45%. So again, that special site for 45% off is savewithnativepath.com/wellnessmama and see why people are adding this to the routine with amazing results.

This podcast is brought to you by Hiya for children and especially I love to talk about their new greens line for children. Now, I have tasted these vitamins and they're delicious, and my kids are the ones who really love them though. And I love that they're getting the nutrients they need without the sugar because most children's vitamins are basically candy in disguise with up to two teaspoons of sugar and dyes and unhealthy chemicals or gummy additives that we don't want our kids to have.

So Hiya created a superpowered children's vitamin that's chewable, without the sugar or the nasty additives and it tastes great. My little ones love it. They especially are designed to fill the most common gaps in modern children's diets to provide full body nourishment with a taste kids love. And it was formulated with the help of pediatricians and nutritional experts and pressed with a blend of 12 organic fruits and vegetables, then supercharged

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with 15 essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D, B12, C, zinc and folate among others.

It's also non-GMO, vegan, dairy free, allergy free, gelatin free, nut free, and everything else you can imagine. I love that they test every single batch with third party testing for heavy heavy metals and microbials in a qualified GMP compliant lab using scientifically validated testing methods so you can be completely at ease knowing it's safe and nutritious and it's designed for kids and sent straight to your door so you don't have to worry about ordering.

My kids really like these and I love that refills show up on schedule with no stress. Also, again, honorable mention to their new greens because if you are tired of battling your kids to eat more greens, their Daily Greens Plus Superfoods is a chocolate flavored greens powder designed specifically for kids and packed with 55+ whole food ingredients to support kids' brains, their development, their digestion, and kids actually like it. We've worked out a special deal with Hiya for the bestselling children's vitamin. Receive 50% off your first order. To claim this deal you must go to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama This deal is not available on their regular website. To get your kids the full body nourishment they need.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and I'm here today with Dr. Sheila Kilbane to talk about moving from depletion to thriving, step-by-step approach to wellness for the whole family. And I am a big fan of Dr. Kilbane. She is a board certified pediatrician who is trained in integrative medicine.

And after realizing she didn't fit the box of conventional medicine, she left the disease management model and sought additional training with Andrew Weil through the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine. She opened one of the first integrative pediatric practices in Charlotte, North Carolina, and has written and worked extensively in this area of integrative pediatrics for kids.

She mentors other practitioners in how to implement integrative medicine into their practices as well, and gives educational lectures to parents and professionals around the globe. One pivotal moment was during the pandemic when Jeffrey Bland, the father of functional medicine, asked her to speak on pediatric immune resilience, the best of conventional and integrative medicine to identify the root cause of children's illnesses.

She's an absolute wealth of knowledge, as you will hear it today. A lot of practical takeaways and some very nuanced things about the order and the steps for supporting cell

wall health and so much more, especially in our kids. So let's jump in. Dr. Sheila, welcome back. Thank you for being here again.

Sheila: Thank you. It's so great to be back. I haven't chatted with you in a while and I enjoyed our last podcast very much.

Katie: Me too. We're long overdue for a catch up and it's so fun to get to record it. And in this episode, we're going to go deep on the topic of true nourishment and from depletion to thriving for the whole family, actually getting to address the kid side as well, which I feel like is really important. Before we jump in, I also wanted to hear a little bit more because you shared before that you have four kidneys, which is very uncommon to begin with.

And you joked that if anyone ever needs a kidney to call you, but seemingly this actually happened. And I would love to hear this story. I don't think I know anybody else with four kidneys.

Sheila: I, so it's not, it's called a duplicate system. And so I have two kidneys put together on each side and which means I also have two ureters on each side. And I have, as a kid I used to get these very high fevers and ended up taking, you know, I got a big workup and took antibiotics for six months and I have been fine ever since.

But in my book I wrote that I kind of jokingly, I'll say, or when I do talks I'll say, if you ever need a kidney you know where to come. And somebody emailed, it's the sweetest thing, just saying she knew somebody who did need a kidney and was that a possibility? And unfortunately, because they're put together on each side, it's not like you could just, you know, take one of them out.

I wouldn't have three left. So I, had to graciously decline, but I thought that was the kindest thing of this person to reach out for her friend.

Katie: Aw, that is so sweet. And you have so much expertise. I've chatted with you before about nuances of pediatric care and how we can help our kids thrive. And in this one, I want to really dive into a topic that I know you work day to day with, with so many families. Which is the idea of understanding like nourishment at a true cellular level within the body and what it actually looks like to move from a more depleted state to absolutely thriving, especially for our kids.

And I've heard you talk about setting the foundation before and getting the body ready before adding things on or adding supplements. And I've talked about this in a corollary way, finding it out on my own, that if we don't have these foundational pieces in place, yes, we can take supplements, but we're not going to get the maximal benefit that we might, if we build this foundation first.

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So I love this topic and I would love for you to walk us through what does that foundation look like? How do we build that foundation? So that the things that we do that are more nuanced or more expensive actually are more effective as well.

Sheila: Yeah, so when kids are...often will have families come to us, the kids may have eczema. They may have asthma. They may have had recurrent illnesses, and we've kind of accepted in our world that kids are going to be on two or three rounds of antibiotics each year, and that just isn't the case. And early on when I started practicing, that didn't make sense to me either.

So when we're setting the foundation, we are starting to look at digestion, at cellular health, at what nutrients are actually needed. And one of the things, especially when we're talking about good cellular health, is we need healthy cell walls. The cell wall is what allows nutrients to go in and out of the cell. It's going to allow, we have this, it should be a nice fluid cell wall. And then when we get cell breakdown, which we always get right with growth and development. If we've got the right amount of the Omega 3 fats, which are, they're anti inflammatory, we're going to have more of a neutral or an anti inflammatory impact when we do have that cell breakdown.

So for example, if we take a kiddo and we start adding, maybe they don't have enough omega 3 fats, which means they're not eating salmon, cold water fish like salmon, mackerel, tuna. Those are the foods and chia seed, flaxseed, hemp seed that have omega 3 fats. So there aren't a ton of them and they aren't really the foods that we eat, especially in this country. So we take a kiddo with a cell wall that's not super healthy and then we maybe, maybe the parents have read and researched and they'll start adding in a lot of different supplements. We won't get the response that we could get if we don't have a really good healthy cell wall. Does that make sense?

Katie: Yeah, it does, and I feel like this is not something that's commonly talked about. Like we talk about gut health more often, or we talk about like absorption, but I don't think a lot of people understand what you're, like the cell wall concept. Like I know this is pretty new to me, and I've done a lot of research in health.

Sheila: Yes. And it's when on our team. So I have a really amazing integrative pharmacist, Deb Allen, and it was bringing both of our different backgrounds and training together and that we've really developed this process that we use. And so as we start to talk about how do we create these healthy cell walls? We need fat. But if we start putting fat into a system that is into a digestive system that isn't working optimally, and that is inflamed, which many of your listeners will know the term leaky gut. And I think we've started to throw that term around, but people forget about what are the things that you actually need, right?

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How much omega 3 fats do I need? How much magnesium do I need? We've got to have adequate amounts of these things so that we can digest, whether it's food or supplements that we're putting in. So when we start, before we even start with the omega 3 fats, is we start with a probiotic. And we use a single strain, soil based probiotic that is extremely gentle. And this it's a really robust it's called lactobacillus plantarum our, you know, it's called planetophilus what the one that we use. And when it hits the gut, it increases, the count increases, and it feeds the other good healthy bacteria. Katie, I know you've done tons of research on probiotics and gut health and we all know that probiotics can transiently change the environment of the gut.

It's not like you give a probiotic and then you've got all kinds of lactobacillus plantarum. It's, it's about shifting the terrain. And so we do it, and this is how it's a little bit different in our practice, is we really specifically do it at the start of breakfast and dinner, because we all get a bump in inflammation when we eat, right?

We have our cell wall, we've got excuse me, we've got the lining of our GI tract. And when you eat, you get absorption of different molecules into the bloodstream. And if we're absorbing undigested food proteins or food particles, we get an increase in inflammation. And so, and I'll take a pause there, but that's where we start to see inflammation can look like bumps on the back of the skin, the cheeks, eczema outbreaks, rosy cheeks, runny nose, you know, dark circles under the eyes, right? Asthma, flares, recurrent illnesses.

So it's, we're starting right at the basis of with the meals and that probiotic starts to decrease inflammation and it enhances our digestion. And it also is very supportive to the immune system. So when we're starting with this foundation, a lot of times in our practice we're not having to go on and do a ton of really complex things. We definitely use different supplements and things, but we really, food is the foundation in setting the digestion and the cellular health.

Katie: Yeah, that's so fascinating to me. And I know Omega 3 deficiency is very common. In fact, I recently did super comprehensive lab testing and that was one of my only ones that was out of range was that Omega 3s could be higher. And I feel like I do eat a lot of seafood too. It made me aware of just how important this probably is, especially in the modern diet.

And also, I love that concept of shifting the terrain and being aware of specific timing. I feel like that aspect is not often talked about, of not just what we eat and take, but when we eat and take. And as another example of that, for instance, eating the same amount of food, protein, calories, everything, but shifting more protein and nutrient density earlier in the day, I noticed a change in my hormones and my sleep. And it really illustrated for me how much timing can be a tool when we understand it.

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So yeah, I would love to go even deeper on this topic and talk about omega 3 seemed like a big part of it. Timing seems important. How do we, understanding this concept of supporting the cell wall, how do we, like, is there kind of like a timeline we follow or steps that we follow in order to give our body the best shot at that?

Sheila: Yeah, absolutely. And I'll of course give you a link that has our integrative supplement guide, but we start supplements. I treat supplements just like medication. So we start one at a time for anywhere from three to seven days. Just depends on how your child is responding. We want to know if they respond good or bad. And so we do the lactobacillus plantarum. We do it at the start of breakfast and dinner. And after that, we start a digestive enzyme. So, that then is, it's a, we use a plant based, a very powerful enzyme, and it has lipase in it, it has protease, right. Lipase breaks down fats, protease breaks down proteins, and it has some other enzymes in it, but those are some of the biggies that I wanted to talk about today, because we want to get that in place, because when we start to add the fish oil, is what we usually use as omega 3 fat, is we want that to be broken down and absorbed.

So fats make up our hormones and especially no matter what age we're talking about, right? If it's a kiddo, right, they need their growth hormone, their testosterone or estrogen. You know, if we're, I'm through menopause, so I want to make sure all of my fats are being absorbed. You are a lot younger than I am, so it's a, right, a different stage. And then so we, our fats are going to make up those cell walls in addition to our hormones and vitamin D, right? Vitamin D is a really big part of our immune system, and the backbone of vitamin D is cholesterol. And when we are looking at the proteases of the proteins, proteins get broken down and absorbed and they make up our neurotransmitters, right?

So our dopamine that helps us think and do our math and make decisions. Serotonin, which is helps motility of our GI tract. It also helps us feel good. Serotonin is also the precursor to melatonin, right? Melatonin helps us fall asleep. And then GABA is another neurotransmitter that helps us stay asleep.

So when we, because we often get calls and emails of, you know, what can we do to help sleep? What can we help to do all these? We don't ever veer off of start these things, you know, get our fish oil and then we'll add those other things. As we know, we've got digestion and our cell walls, a really healthy cell walls being created.

Katie: Yeah, I feel like these steps get overlooked so often and probably for kids, especially in how quickly they respond to things can make a drastic difference. Like I'm sure you see kids just like have complete transformations all the time in your practice. And I know you do this with so many families. I love that you also brought up enzymes.

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This was something I have been experimenting with, even from supporting like strength training and the ability to build muscle, especially in conjunction with protein, which I love any chance we get to talk about protein, especially for growing kids. And I have a bunch of youth athletes in my house.

And so this is something we talk about often. You also mentioned vitamin D. I also love anytime we get to step on the soapbox and talk about vitamin D and especially sunlight and natural light exposure. I know for me personally, this has been absolutely life changing to be aware of and really dial in my light exposure.

And I went from very fair skinned Irish Scottish background, sunburning all the time, to now with an anti inflammatory diet and very careful sun exposure, I feel like, my vitamin D levels are 86, which I've never had in my life. I feel great. My skin is better. I feel like for kids, especially that can be a really important factor, which I know it's tough when they're in school all day. But I would love for you to speak a little more on protein and sunlight. Cause I feel like those are... kids are going to eat anyway. So if we can make more protein in their diet and, or get them outside more, those are relatively free tools that can make a huge difference.

Sheila: Yes, exactly. So the first thing about sunshine is I will always, like we will we supplement vitamin D in the wintertime because most people where we live are not going to get enough. If you were naked on your roof all day long, you wouldn't synthesize enough vitamin D. But in the summertime, I always want kids to go off of vitamin D and it takes depending upon the pigment of your skin, it can take anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour to synthesize the amount of vitamin D you need a day. And you don't synthesize it when you have sunscreen on.

So we want to do it, but we don't want to burn and, right, especially newborns and younger babies. You want to be very careful with that. But I always prefer we get our vitamin D naturally whenever possible. And then that also... and the body is so beautifully designed that if you're... because vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin right, A, D, E, and K are all fat soluble. And that means you can overdose on them if you're taking them as a supplement. But the body, if you're in the sunshine for a long period of time and your vitamin D levels are building up, your body will start to photo degrade the vitamin D and it's, which is, the body is incredible, right?

And in addition to all of that, especially in the morning, you want that sunlight to hit your retina and that's going to help sleep at night, right? Because we're always trying to give something to sleep at night, but what you do during the day impacts how you sleep. And when you sleep, that's how we get this autophagy of the GI tract and the turnover of cells.

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So it's the, all of those things are going to be enhanced with vitamin D and we've got... vitamin D is more like a hormone than a vitamin. We have a receptor on almost every cell of the body and it plays a huge role in the immune system.

Katie: Yeah, it's so fascinating. I just echo like getting enough of the right kind of light exposure has changed my life so much and also minimizing artificial light exposure at night, which for kids, I feel like they respond almost instantly when you adapt the light environment. And that's one thing that once we set up in our home and create the environment, it's relatively hands off and no extra effort required and can make such a big difference.

You said, understandably, kids and sleep is a big question for you in pediatrics. And that's one thing that's worked so well in my house. And back to the digestion side, I've heard before, you know, it's not what we eat, it's what we digest and absorb. And that applies to food, that applies to supplements, that applies to how our organs are functioning and the nutrients we're uptaking and so much.

So I would guess also, this is a massive pivot point in the work that you do with people when they come in, if they have any kind of digestive issue going on. What are some of the other ways we can encourage really healthy digestion in our kids and take this into account to give them the healthiest digestion? And then as a byproduct nutrient absorption and overall health.

Sheila: Yeah, so we have our lactobacillus, we have our single strain probiotic. We've got our digestive enzyme. We're adding in our good, healthy omega 3 fats, our vitamin D, and we want to make sure that we're activating the parasympathetic nervous system, right? Because that is where, in medical school, we learn it as feed and breed, meaning those are the things that when you, you need your parasympathetic nervous system when you're eating. And that's that relaxation side.

So that's going to be walking outside barefooted, deep breathing, extending your exhalation longer than your inhalation, playing, doing the things that make you feel good. Because we can have perfect supplements and perfect diet, but if we're in a stressed state, that is going to shift our blood flow.

So the blood flow is going to shift away from the gut to the arms and the legs so that we can run away from that stressor, that lion in the forest, that for a lot of us just stays because we're on our phones. We're on, right? Maybe parents have some stress at home. And stress isn't always bad.

I don't, I always want to be clear about that. Stress can motivate us, right? We may study for a test, you know, do the things that we need to do. We just need those toolbox and we need to, every single day, we need those periods of time where we're activating the parasympathetic nervous system. That's also going to release the salivary juices from our mouth, which begin the digestive process. They're going to release the help with the digestive enzymes. They're going to help with motility of the GI tract, right? So that we have a good bowel movement every day. And paying attention to that as a parent, because what's happening with our systems impacts what's happening to the kids. So we want to be very cognizant of it for ourselves so that we're we're creating the environment for digestion, right?

And that's why we talk about sitting down and eating and having, you know, who are we eating with? Having a meal that our digestion is relaxed, our system is relaxed so that we can optimize digestion, vitamin absorption, right, the immune system, everything is going to be enhanced. And the healing process is triggered when we're activating the parasympathetic nervous system. Heart rates going to go down, respiratory rates going to go down.

And it's a critical piece that we really don't learn about in medical school and residency and it's completely overlooked and it's a harder piece of the puzzle, right? Sometimes for parents it's easier to put on, to add some supplements on and think, okay, this is good or even to change the diet. But the nervous system is a critical component of this. And I wanted to say one other thing about because we're talking about the digestive enzymes are, when you're talking about recovery from, whether it's weight training, physical activity, whatever it is, you're doing. Those enzymes, the proteases in the enzyme, there are times you can take those on an empty stomach.

You know, we have ones that are just it's just a high dose protease. And that is going to get absorbed into the bloodstream and that's going to help with oxygen exchange, detoxification, again with the immune system. So there are different ways, that's where we talk about the timing of things. Also, that we're going to enhance the utilization of what we're talking about. And part of what I love about these is that it's using the body's natural processes. And proteases also help with biofilm disruption, which is an entirely different discussion. But it's all of the things that are working when we're setting the foundation to keep the kids, right, off of antibiotics. Building that resiliency.

Katie: That makes sense. And as you were talking about, you know, spending time outside in the sunlight barefoot and playing and these nervous system regulating modalities, I was thinking how wonderful that kids are naturally inclined to a lot of those things. If we can just

support their natural inclinations. They kind of come out of the box with those things programmed in and we can actually learn from them in that aspect.

And it sounds like there are definitely commonalities in how adults work with these things you're talking about. And also some things that are a little bit specific to children. So I'd love to hear a little bit, like, what are the similarities and differences between children and adults when it comes to implementing these steps? Or are there any extra cautions we need to understand with children of various ages?

Sheila: Yeah. So the way that we do this, and the products that we use, the supplements we use, are safe, right? We're looking at ingredients, and we dose based upon weight and age. So, and it's actually very similar, whether it's a one or two month old or a 30, 50 year old. We, you know, we have supplement cards with dosing based on age.

And so the probiotic, and that's also because it's so gentle. And if you have compromised digestion, and what does that mean? If you have bloating, gassiness, you know, belly aches, especially belly aches after you eat, this is a great, gentle nudge. And when it comes to the digestive enzymes, the one thing you want to be careful about is if you have something called a synophylic esophagitis, or maybe an undiagnosed ulcer, that we may have to wait, start to work with the family a little bit before we start that. And then we would start the digestive enzymes mid meal.

Because that can, if you've got raw tissue along the lining of your esophagus, that can create some irritation and they'll have pain. You'll know immediately. And so you want to stop it, wait, work a little bit more, and then you can restart it. And same thing with the omega 3 fats, right? You just want to make sure, like if we have a kid with significant loose stools, we're going to work and get those loose stools resolved, or improve significantly before we start adding in those fats.

Because that's, right, you have a really quick transit time if you've got loose stools or diarrhea and so your body is not breaking down things and absorbing them. And so it's really, this is across the board and we have families do things all together. And we'll have parents who they'll get off their antacid meds, they'll stop their migraine medications, they'll decrease antihistamines, asthma medications. And again, it doesn't have to be complex. That's the thing is I think we miss the forest through the trees. We just have to start. You just have to start with the basics.

Katie: Yeah, it seems like a recurring lesson for me is not to underestimate the simple things. They can actually be often the most effective and profound, especially when done consistently and intentionally. And you've given already so many practical takeaways. I've

made tons of show notes, and I'll make sure I link to your website into your work because I know you have so many resources for parents.

If someone is listening today and they are maybe a little bit overwhelmed or their child has some of these things we've talked about, what is a good baby step for them to start with and where can they find you and keep learning from you?

Sheila: Yeah, so my website is sheilakilbane.com. And I have a book and it's really, the book is a very easy read, short chapters, it's all color photos. It's got, the first ten chapters are the science, the second section is the how to, and then the third section are recipes, and I've got an appendix with all, you know, Omega 3 fats, for example. How do we know if we need to supplement? You go through and I have listed out, right, how much do they need, what are the foods that have it, similar to vitamin D. And we have a lot of resources online as well, it's just taking those first baby steps.

Katie: Amazing. Well, I will link to all of those in the show notes for any of you listening on the go highly recommend Dr. Sheila and her work. You're absolutely incredible. I love anytime I get to chat with you and we're going to get to do another episode. So you guys stay tuned for that one. We're going to talk about the nervous system, but Dr. Sheila, for this episode, thank you so much. I learned a lot. I'm so grateful for your time. Thank you for being here.

Sheila: Thanks, Katie. I always enjoy talking to you.

Katie: And thank you as always for listening. And I hope you will join me again on the next episode of the wellness mama podcast.