301 - Overview of supportive and alternative care Transcript

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Season Three Introduction

Hi, welcome to season three of the baby manual podcast, the holistic mama's handbook. This season will go through alternative and supportive care to help you take care of your little one when they're sick, but too young to take most medicines.

I'm your host, a pediatrician and mom, and the author of The Baby Manual and The Holistic Mama's Handbook, Dr. Carol Keim. Hello and welcome to season three, episode one.

Today I'm going to talk about the different types of complementary and alternative medicine that we have available for children. The reason I am putting this together is because children who are less than three and even under age six still get sick and they do suffer from many common things.

But there are a lot of times that in the office I have to tell parents there's not really much to do except wait it out. And I don't like that answer.

So I've started going to alternative practitioners, interviewing them, going through the research, and I found that there actually is a lot of things that we can do to help our children feel better when they're not feeling well.

Western Medicine Overview

I find that Western medicine, which is our traditional medical system in the US, does have some great advantages, like it's really good at keeping you alive and treating illnesses with things like antibiotics, but it is not always the best at improving quality of life and so I found that a multi-faceted approach is really often the better one.

You can treat both the symptoms and the underlying disease at the same time and it possible to do multiple things at one time to help your children feel better.

But it's important to know what's safe, what has been proven to help, and what can actually interfere with other types of modalities as well. I'm writing a book called The Holistic Mama's Handbook.

It's coming out on November 15th of 2023. And you can preorder it on Amazon if you're listening to this before that. Otherwise, it is available for Amazon purchase.

But stay tuned through this season because we're going to go through things like teething, colic, constipation, allergies, all kinds of stuff. So this episode is all about what types of modalities are available.

There are different types practitioners you might want to see. So Western medical doctors are things like MDs and DOs. And then we also have mid-level providers like nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

And we all have very similar training, but MDs and DOs have a lot more training and a more in-depth understanding of medications and how they work in the body than do PAs and NPs.

Our philosophy is that the Body is a collection of independent systems and that you treat the underlying cause whenever possible, and we also aim to prolong life as well.

We use tools like physical examination, lab testing, so blood testing urine testing stool testing. We can do nose swabs. we do imaging like ultrasound, CAT scans, MRIs, x-rays.

And then we use medications whose direct action has been well understood and proven scientifically to work. So we know how it's working on a cellular level or a chemical level and why it is helping you to get better.

The training for a medical doctor is typically four years of college undergraduate degree, then four of years medical school. The first two years are classroom learning and the second two are in hospital bedside learning.

And then we have three to five years residency where you're working directly underneath some other doctors so that they're watching you through the process and helping you learn as you are also practicing medicine.

Then some doctors will also sub-specialize. So you may hear things like there's a pediatrician who has their three to five years of residency, but then to become, say, a Pediatric Cardiologist, you have to do a fellowship afterwards.

How to tell if you've got a good one? Well, an MD or DO should be open-minded and it should ask lots of questions, should perform a complete physical examination, and should offer you multiple treatment options.

And they're gonna work together with you on the treatment plan. So it's not just a single, your child has this one thing and there's only one treatment for it.

Acupuncture for Children

Try to find one that will give you a couple of different options because when you hear things like you have to do this or there is nothing you can do, It means they're not really thinking outside the box enough.

Again, look for someone who's an MD or DO rather than a nurse practitioner or physician assistant because they just don't have as much training and they don t necessarily know where those gaps are so they might not be thinking of all the possible scenarios.

As far as alternative medicine goes, acupuncture is one of the oldest medical systems in the world. And their philosophy is that your body has qi inside, which is the energy that flows through your bodies, and when you stimulate points along these specific channels that the qI runs along, it can affect nerves and muscles, It releases chemicals into the bloodstream and it can trigger the body's natural healing mechanisms to bring about homeostasis.

And homeo stasis is when your body is in balance and is able to heal well. So it's not too inflamed, but it is also just inflame enough to fight off infections.

For children, acupuncture doesn't involve needles. It's actually called shonation. And they use these tools, like these blunt objects, little triangle-shaped things and things that look like little combs.

They can stroke or press along these chi channels. These can have the same effect as it would to put needles in an adult. When you go to a pediatric acupuncturist, they should not be putting needles into your child.

I know a lot of parents get really nervous thinking that their children are going to be stuck with needles, and they will not. So other tools for acupuncture in children.

They will observe your child, they'll ask questions, They'll feel the pulses on both of their wrists. Sometimes they look at their tongue and then they will treat them.

So the blunt tools are used to stroke and tap and push on the points and it should be painless. It should not be scary. And sometimes they will also use things like cupping, which is using either fire cupping where they'll put a flame into a glass cup and then take that away and put the cup onto the child and it sucks up their skin into it.

Or they can use these pressure cups that are hooked up to a little system that they pump and that can bring more blood flow into that area. And it does sometimes cause these circular bruises, but that is a normal part of it, and it helps with that blood flow and healing.

And sometimes they use Moxibustion. That means burning something called moxa, which is made from mugwort. They can put the moxah sticks that they used.

It smells a little bit like incense.

Chiropractic Care

Then they'll hold it close to your child, it warms up, then the Moxa itself is meant to be healing, that's really nice. The training for an acupuncturist is four years of a college undergraduate degree, and then three years at acupunture school to become a licensed acu-punctuist, or LAC, And then a four-year degree.

So that's just one extra year to be a Doctor of Acupuncture in Chinese Medicine. I do recommend going to a DACM if possible, because they will probably also have training in chinese herbs, which can often help a lot along with these acuplcture techniques.

And how to spot a good one? They should be certified in pediatric acupuncture or shone shin, they should have experience with pediatrics, and again, DACM versus an LAC is preferred.

For chiropractic, the philosophy of chiropractic is that the body has an innate ability to heal itself and that nerves control everything. And the nerves that come out of the spine sometimes get compressed from bones being out-of-alignment.

When they get a little bit compressed, pressure on those nerves causes dysfunction in the bodies. So relieving that pressure should help to increase the nerve flow to the various end organs and muscles and should restore homeostasis in your body.

The tools that you'll see with chiropractic, first they do adjustments primarily. So adjustments in children should not involve twisting or popping. They should be very gentle.

A lot of times they just use their pinkies, or they may use, and that's called manual manipulation, um, sometimes they use the whole hand. There's a little clicker device that they can use and it looks like a tiny pogo stick.

It just goes onto the bone itself and makes a clicking noise and will click several times as they push onto it. And that will gently and very accurately move one of the bones.

And you may notice different types of tables at different chiropractic offices.

Naturopathy Basics

So there are flat tables that are just like a solid massage table. There are ones called drop tables where different sections will come out. And then sometimes they'll do adjustments on these really small tables, that look sort of like footstool or ottoman, and your child may be kneeling on the ground and then leaning onto that table The training for a chiropractor involves three or four years of undergraduate school and then three to four year of chiropractic school where they earn a D. C.

which is a doctor of Chiropractic. The way to find a good one, you can look on a website called icpa4kids.com and find one that is a certified pediatric chiropractor.

They should be certified in Webster technique, they should gentle, listen to your child, and your children should not say ouch or be hurt during any of the adjustments and again no twisting and no popping.

I find that a lot of pediatric chiropractors are also certified in prenatal chiropractic. So I would prefer a pre-natally and pediatric chiropractor over a general chirapractor just because they are more specialized and tend to be a little more gentle.

Naturopathy is a relatively new field of medicine, about 50 years old at this point. And with natuopathy, the philosophy is that the body has the inherent nature to heal itself and you treat the whole person, including mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, and social components.

First, do no harm, just like with Western medicine. Identify and treat the cause, but not just the symptoms. And prevention is the best cure. When really the idea of naturopathy is that we try to use natural medicines, things like supplements and foods and lifestyle changes before turning to Western medical treatments like prescription medications or over-the-counter medications.

A naturopathic doctor is a teacher whose main role is to educate, empower, and motivate parents to take responsibility of their own health and their children's health.

So some of the tools you'll see used are things like nutrition counseling, homeopathy, herbal remedies, hydrotherapy, which is using hot or cold water or blankets or towels that are wet to wrap the child and to stimulate things, like the immune system to kick up, massage, fascial manipulation, Which looks a lot like massage but is a little gentler and more superficial.

It's not as deep. Acupuncture, some are trained in acupuncture, sometimes fasting techniques or intermittent fasting and breathing techniques.

Homeopathy Explained

But since naturopathy is so broad, there are not very many studies that have been done on it as a discipline, but there a lot of studies about the specific techniques that are used.

So when I cover some of these things in future episodes, you'll hear me referring to more like the homeopathic approach and supplements and herbs and things like that.

Training to become a naturopathic doctor are four years of undergraduate degree and then four-years of natropathy school. And the curriculum includes a lot of the same classes as Western medical doctors, but less pharmacology and more training on things like herbal and alternative remedies and modalities.

The way to find a good naturopath is one who is certified by the AANMC and one knows when to refer to Western doctors when they do need medicine or other pharmacologic interventions.

Also, I would find one that is not selling supplements from their own office but recommending things like vitamins and supplements in general because I found there can sometimes be a conflict of interest.

As you may know, with Western medical doctors, we're not able to have any sort of financial agreement with any pharmacology companies. And if we do, it's considered a conflict of interest.

It's unethical and illegal to be affiliated with a pharmacy company. That's because we want to know that our doctors are only prescribing things that are actually best for the patient.

and not things that benefit them financially. And I feel that way about a lot of providers. So any alternative providers that are only trying to sell you a specific brand of supplements that they carry in their office, a lots of times do have financial ties to that company.

They may not necessarily be suggesting the ones that would be best for your child, but rather they may have that conflict of interest. Homeopathy is something that is very controversial.

The philosophy of homeopathy is that like cures like and that when you take a substance and you dilute it multiple times, somewhere between 20 and 200 times the stronger it gets or the more active it is.

This goes against Western medical treatment and a lot of our scientific thinking and is really difficult to prove in studies. With homeapathy, the tools they use are Observing a person's constitution.

So seeing what sort of body type they have, how they move, what they think, um, with their lifestyle is like. And they get this sort a gestalt about the person and also about that disease itself or the symptoms themselves.

They may recommend slightly different treatments based on that.

Aromatherapy and Essential Oils

Things like whether a mucus is thick or thin, whether there's a burning sensation in the eyes or a tickling sensation, things like that where it's just these very slight differences.

So there's not really a specific, like with Western medicine, we have a treatment that treats this one disease. With homeopathy, it's more this constellation of symptoms in this type of person tends to respond well to this homeopathic intervention.

The way that they make homeopathic remedies is they dilute whatever substance it is in water and then they'd diluted that another 10 times and another ten times until they've reached a dilution where the original substance is no longer detectable.

And then, they use that water to turn it into, sometimes they leave it as a liquid substance and so things like homeopathy eye drops or sometimes teething medicines will be liquids or they turn them into pellets that are made with sugar.

For a classical homeopath, they should have two to four years of undergraduate training and then three to 4 years homeopathy school. So a good homeo path will be considered a CCH or certified classical Homeopath.

And they shouldn't again be recommending remedies based on the remedy itself, not on specific brands or ones that they have available. Aromatherapy is another one that we sometimes use and the philosophy of aromtheraphy is that you can strengthen the self-healing process by stimulating the immune system.

So inhaled stent molecules will travel along the olfactory nerves to the emotional center of the brain called the amygdala and can trigger a reaction in there.

And you may know already, sometimes strong smells can really associate you with various times in your life in certain instances and can bring you back in time.

It's kind of amazing. But also we find receptors for these molecules all over the body. And so some essential oils are absorbed through the skin and can actually work on the immune system and be anti-inflammatory.

Some work to relax muscles. There are some that will work in the airways when you breathe in, the smell of them to help open up the lungs. So essential oil, it's important to find a good brand that is made well so they can be extracted either by steam distillation or cold processing.

And you want to that is pure, that only has the one type of ingredient in it. And you can look up companies online to see which ones are made well and which are really tested well.

But these are not FDA regulated, so it can be tricky. Remember that the oils that can be either inhaled through a diffuser, they should never be directly inhalable like in a nebulizer or anything like that.

They should just be put into a defuser with water which puts the smell out into the room. Or sometimes they're ingested but very rarely in children because they are so concentrated they can actually become poisonous in the children.

So I very very recommend ingesting them. And they could be applied topically as well to the skin.

Nutrition, Supplements, and Closing

When you're applying essential oils topicaly to children you should put it in a carrier oil, which is an inert oil something like coconut oil almond oil avocado oil and that will help to dilute the essential oil down so it's not so

concentrated and it doesn't burn their skin or irritate it.

There's no training required to become an aromatherapist, and so a way to spot a good one is somebody that has a big range of experience who's not tied to a particular brand, who will recommend, again, the oil itself rather than the specific brand of the Good oils come in dark glass bottles because light can often break down these components in them.

And they'll list the plant name in Latin and also sometimes in English. Then they shouldn't have any other chemicals added into them When it comes to nutrition and supplements, just about anyone can help to suggest things like nutritional interventions and various vitamins and supplement that your child can take.

So there's not anything in particular pertaining to that, but we will go through various nutritional intervention as I go though the different topics in the future.

But of course, nothing can really replace a very good healthy diet filled with lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, minimally processed foods, and things like healthy proteins, which may include meats, but can also include vegetable protein sources, in lots and lots water.

So remember, the Holistic Mama's Handbook will be available on Amazon after November 15th of 2023. You can pre-order it now if it hasn't been that date yet, or if has, you can just go on and order.

It's available all around the world. And also, if you have a little one who's less than a year old, remember that there's a book called The Baby Manual that I wrote as well.

Sure, you know that there's lots of episodes in this podcast as well about that. But if you like all your information in one place, one of these books would be a great way to get all of that I hope you have a wonderful day and thank you for listening.

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