Introduction to EMF and inflammation

it makes a big difference. Like we're just, all we're trying to do is reduce the amount of like inflammatory assaults that are just hitting us all day long and all night.

So if you can at least just do something about your bedroom's exposure to EMF, you know, most notably just so that when you're sleeping, when your brain is in that data state, that you're not, you're not just bombarded with those EMFs.

That's something that would really move the dial and something that people don't necessarily think about.

Podcast intro and guest welcome

Hi, I'm Dr. Monica Haragy and welcome to Truly Healthy MD. I have one question for you. What's really behind the way you feel? As a functional medicine doctor, I'm passionate about helping you uncover the hidden causes of your health concerns and finally connecting the dots.

From balancing hormones, to overcoming Lyme disease, boosting brain health, or just finding new ways to feel your best every day. This podcast is packed with insights and strategies to help you take control of your health and live holy.

Ready to explore what's possible and be truly healthy? Welcome back to the Truly Healthy MD podcast, where we get to the root causes of your health concerns.

I'm excited today to welcome Andrea McHugh, who is going to talk to us about a problem that's pretty common, both with kids and with adults, which is eczema.

So welcome to the show. Dr. Monica, thank you so much for having me on. Excellent. So I always like to know how people got to to what they're doing, right?

Andrea's eczema origin story

Because those stories are always so inspiring and so important to understand why you do what you do. We'll talk about eczema in a minute, but tell me your story.

How did you get to where you are right now? Sure. We're just one of those, you know, classic make your message type of cases. Six years ago, I had two kids that were covered head to toe with severe, severe eczema.

My third daughter was just born with eczema. I mean, she came out and they noted this neonatal rash and it just got worse and worse and worse and worse.

And simultaneously, my two-year-old came down with eczema like you would a cold. It was just so quick and acute. And it just took over both of their bodies.

And at the time I was working in the dental industry, And, you know, it like started to come together. It's like, oh my goodness, all this exposures that, you know, I was exposed to, you know, throughout like my tenure and I worked in a very large hospital here in Denver and it's a lot of radiation, it's a lot of chemicals, a lot of things.

And it's like, you know, some of these things are making sense. But anyway, I took I took these two kids to the

pediatrician, as one does when you have sick children, and they're like, wow, this is really bad.

I was like, yep, that's why I'm here. And he said, wow, you're going to need both of these prescriptions. And he gave me two separate prescriptions. He said, put gloves on yourself, because they're admittedly very toxic, and throw some bleach in their bath at night.

and go ahead and throw the third one in there too. I had $3 at the time, like it's fine. And I was like, well, okay. And I was holding my month old baby in one arm and I was holding the hand of my two year old with the other arm and I was just like, this just can't be it.

This just can't be our story. And it just took off from there. Yeah. And so at this point, what, your career is reversing eczema naturally, is that correct?

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. People get into the steroid cycle, you know, and that's understandable because somebody in a white coat is saying, this is the best you can do.

And, you know, I was tempted many, many times. And the point of point is, is if you're on that cycle, if you've been doing steroids or you're experiencing TSW or any of those things, like, or just, you know, tried them for a while and they didn't work, or you've been on for years, like there's still, you can still wean off of them.

So. Yeah. Okay. So let's start with, you know, what is eczema to start out with? Sure. Well, you know, and I know your listeners are so well informed, but, you know, it presents as a skin issue, but it's not a skin issue at all, right?

We're dealing with a digestion issue. We're dealing with a lymphatic flow issue. We're dealing with a detoxification issue. Your white blood cells are all activated.

There's mast cell activation.

What eczema really is

There's so many things going on, right? Your liver is most definitely overburdened. There's nutritional deficiencies. There's so many things, yeah? And then you're seeing those toxins that should be excreted through the proper channels come out through the skin.

And that's what's creating that burning, itchy scaly rash. Yeah. And as you said, this is a systemic issue. That is why, as you were saying before, when we just do the treatment that we know works for a small amount of time, which is put some steroids on top of the skin, it'll work for a little while, but it doesn't really get to the root.

The root is systemic. So what are the most common misconceptions, you would say, with eczema? I mean, we touched on the top two. Like, one, it's a skin issue.

Like, it's obviously most definitely not. Two, the steroids will fix it. Like you just said, it just doesn't get to the root. But it helps, yeah, in the short term, just reduce inflammation.

It's just suppressing your immune system a little bit so you have some time to recover. And that's fine, you know, that is food based is another common myth I see, you know, like eczema doesn't exist because gluten, right, or because dairy.

It's like, everyone should be able to, you know, frolic in a field of all the grasses while eating gluten, you know, on the way to a birthday party and be okay, you know, and but these, you know, people that are afflicted with this disease are not.

And so, you know, that's another one that I see a lot. And I'd also say that just that it's a lifelong issue, that it's a chronic issue. You know, chronic just means you'll hear that and chronic just means that there's not necessarily like a direct treatment for it.

Common eczema misconceptions

There's like a direct cure for it. And so that's why they throw around the world the word chronic. But what I want everyone to know in listening to this is it's most definitely reversible.

You can absolutely reverse this condition. Right. And that's why we're having this conversation so that people can understand that there are things that they can do more than just put a bandaid on the issue.

And eczema is something pretty common both in kids and in adults. And there's a lot of people out there that are desperate to get this problem solved because it's very uncomfortable and associated also with a lot of other symptoms.

So Where should people start if they have this problem? Yeah, I mean, we start in the kitchen, right? That's just the first thing you could do. Just make sure everything is real whole food based.

That's number one. At the time, we were really healthy people. We eat vegetables, and we were fit and all the things. But still, even in a healthy kitchen, there's a lot of processed foods.

It's actually a surprising amount. If you really go through and try and take all the processed foods out of your fridge and your pantry, there's quite a few.

So we start there, just real whole food that's combined properly for proper digestion to really, you know, help you extract the nutrients that you need to get from the food, you know, because that's why we eat in the first place.

And that's also prepared properly. So we're lowering, you know, the lectins and the anti-nutrients and all the things that we can so that it just unburdens your liver and gives your digestive system a bit of a break.

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Excellent. Yeah, that's that's excellent advice. And so when people manifest with this eczema, it's not just just because, right?

Starting with diet and gut health

Like something's happening in the body and what is that inflammatory storm? What causes this to come on? I would say it starts with leaky gut, with the dysbiosis, right?

The vat is overtaking the good in the simplest terms, right? And so we need to rebalance that, right? Because once that's happening and then those toxins that are coming out through your small intestine, things like that, they're excreting into your bloodstream and then it's circulating throughout your body and then that's what's just creating this systemic inflammation and then you're also you know it's combined with your blood sugar roller coaster going up and down up and down that helps you know up your systemic inflammation as well and I know I know your listeners are also so research and like know all of this and but that really yeah that's like at the at the root of it yeah there's a lot of things that have to happen for the human body to actually malfunction because there are a lot of safety nets in place and so absolutely a lot of the stuff does start in the gut as with a lot of other disease processes.

So I've seen it over and over. I'm sure you have too, that the gut is the place where these disease processes start. And thus that's where we need to start when we start addressing these problems.

And so, as you said previously, the most common approach is to go with steroids from a conventional standpoint. But are there any alternatives to that to put on the skin?

Yeah, that's where we go next because symptom management is very real, right? You're so uncomfortable. It's called the rash that itches. It's just so bad.

So I found the best. most nutritive, soothing thing was herbal oils. And so I started making those and that process of infusing these like anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory, moisturizing, skin-loving herbs into a base oil like jojoba oil is really well tolerated.

that really helps like the lipophilic properties of the oil into the, you know, the fat in your skin. It just helps deliver all these nutrients into the tissues and it just helps with that like cellular turnover.

Why eczema is systemic

So each round of cells is just a little healthier, a little bit better, a little bit, little bit, little bit more, you know? So we do that, Epsom salt baths.

You know, it's like a real therapy. It's just helping you detoxify. It's helping you remineralize, you know? Yeah, it helps on a lot of levels. Yeah, yeah.

It's also calming. It's helping your nervous system. So that's just like a slam dunk therapy you should absolutely do, ideally every night. I don't know if your nervous system is regulated, everything else is going to feel better.

Then you're ahead of the curve, but this is stressful. This is stressful if you're watching somebody else go through this or if you're experiencing it yourself.

What helped me a lot in understanding this, because then there were times I was like, oh no, I'm so stressed and I'm stretching out my baby and this is why she can't heal and all the things after I'd gone through so many things and trying to get this under control.

It's like the dysbiosis is stressful. You know, in her case, because since my kids were so young, it's like, that's the stress, you know, it's real. So you're the physiological stress on top of the nervous system stress.

And then we use some herbs to start to combat the itch and the staph, because if you're experiencing eczema, you Most definitely have a little extra stuff on your skin.

So that's something to do there. And it also just helps you be a little more comfortable. And then we follow that up with the most like nutritive viscous cream.

It's tallow based. So it's rich in vitamins A, D, E, and K. And it's paired with castor oil. And it just really helps soak in as much moisture as you possibly can because your skin barrier needs that help.

And so develop that process.

Topical alternatives and symptom relief

Yeah, it's good to know that there are alternatives Obviously there's going to be times when the steroid cream is absolutely needed in severe cases, but down the line, what we want to avoid is the chronic use of these steroids because then the body becomes dependent on them and you can't get off of them because when you try it's just terrible, rebound skin conditions.

So having the alternatives and knowing when to use the alternatives, when it's absolutely necessary to use the steroids is going to help so many people, so many families out there.

And this is a very overwhelming thing, right? If your kid has a severe eczema, very symptomatic, and we're trying to teach these families how to do things in the kitchen, it could probably be super overwhelming for the families.

So how do you break it down for these families for it to be just day to day? what things they need to do. How does that conversation look like? Sure. Because nothing's going to work if you can't do it consistently, right?

That's what it is, is small actions over time. That's how you really move the needle. But everyone that I come in contact with, it's just not that big of a leap.

They've already tried everything. They've been to the pediatrician and the allergist and the dermatologist and then the naturopath and the craniosacral person and the chiropractor.

They've tried everything. And they are eating gluten, dairy, and there's just still, there's just stuff that they're missing. So, you know, we just go through, it really depends if it's like the adult that's experiencing it or it's a baby or a teenager, right?

You just go through. What does your day look like? And then how do we incorporate these things and these nutrients throughout your day and what makes sense for you?

And, you know, there's always a way that doesn't take over your life, that doesn't make sure you have to live in the kitchen, that you can still work, you can still go to school, you can still do all the things that you need to do.

So that's what we work on. It's just like make a plan, make a doable plan. Yeah. Fatigue, brain fog, mood swings, weight gain. If you're a woman in your 40s to 70s, you've probably been told that it's just aging.

But what if it's not? At trulyhealthymd.com, we look deeper. Hormones, nervous system health, hidden toxicities. You're not broken. You just need a doctor who really listens.

Visit trulyhealthymd.com and book a consultation today. It's time to feel like your real self again. Yeah, having a plan is so important. than just a list of things that have to happen, an actual plan.

Right. And so I know that you've seen families that have been through a lot. They've done a steroids, they've taken probiotics, used biologics. What's missing?

Why do all these interventions fall short? Well, the allopathic ones are just like the natural and the allopathic ones. Just in general, yeah. But I know that there's people who are still struggling with this that have tried both the allopathic, the steroids, the medications.

Making eczema care manageable for families

the more integrative elimination diets, probiotics, and still struggling with this. Yeah, because you're not actually healing and sealing the gut. I mean, you have to subtract what needs to be subtracted, first off, for a little while.

Like the half-life of these IgG antibodies is like 21 days. So you really do have to weed some things out for, I say, 90 days. and be really, really on it for that time, which will go by in an instant.

And it's not that big a deal because you're eating real whole food. It's not like at all calorie restricted by any means. But I think people, no matter what they're trying, they're expecting it to be a little more instantaneous than it actually is.

you know it's understandable because it's miserable to live that way like it's miserable to be getting up every three hours it's miserable to have burny flaky skin and I mean that's my goal is to get people out of that way of of living as quickly as possible because yeah it's a nightmare there's certainly more serious things there's really awful diseases out there but if you're not sleeping and you're miserable Life's just not that joyous.

Yeah, for sure. So you're saying it's not just like, hey, I'm just going to add this appointment or I'm just going to add this one more change in your diet.

It's a process and it's something that takes time. So you have to know from the start that it's going to be a little while, but the goal is there and it's achievable.

And you see wins along the way, right? And that's what motivates you to keep going. Yeah, yeah, excellent. And so I know that there's a lot of environmental factors that affect eczema and there are some environmental triggers that might be overlooked.

Which ones do you see being overlooked more often? Well, no one likes to look at mold or things like that. That sounds like a really scary thing. It's like, it's probably no mold.

I live in a drier state. That's probably fine. And I don't really want to open that can of worms. I don't see any act of mold. So that's one. It's just like, I feel like it's worthwhile to just do one of those petri dish tests.

You just set it out in your rooms and send it back to the lab as just a first step if it's at all, at all, at all a consideration in your mind. Just do that.

And then EMF is a big one. We're never going to get away from EMFs, but there's things you can do. I mean, there's easy, free things you can do, like turn off your router at night, right?

Why treatments fall short without gut healing

It makes a big difference. Like we're just, all we're trying to do is reduce the amount of like inflammatory assaults that are just hitting us all day long and all night.

So if you can at least just do something about your bedroom's exposure to EMF, most notably, just so that when you're sleeping, when your brain is in that data state, that you're not just bombarded with those EMFs.

That's something that would really move the dial. something that people don't necessarily think about because there's like the everyone starts with the laundry detergent which does help absolutely you need to have a non-toxic laundry detergent and you need to be eating with no plastic stuff eating with glass and then You know, I just, I think the best cleaning components are just like baking soda, vinegar, and some tea tree essential oil.

It's like what I have in my cleaning caddy and it works the best and it's just non-toxic as it comes. So those things. Basic stuff. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

And they clean really well too. Right? Yeah. Yep. And I'm sure that there's a big difference and every person's different. Some people are going to heal faster.

Some people are going to heal slower. Do you see a pattern as far as if there's some people that heal faster? What's the pattern there? I would say consistency.

Certainly, you know, it's not like, oh, yeah, but then there was a party and I did X, Y, and Z. that. And I think also just a belief that you can, that you can get over this, because I know a lot of people have lived with this for a really, really long time, and they understandably feel a little discouraged.

But that mindset piece, not to be cliche, it matters. If you really do believe in your heart that you or your child can get over this, they will.

Environmental triggers: mold, EMF, and toxins

Yeah, yeah, that mindset, it has to be the first thing. Absolutely. And so many things that we do. Because yeah, as you said, a lot of the people that we come across that come to us are people who have been dealing with illness for a very long time.

And it is difficult to shift that mindset. Is there anything specific that you do to help people shift that mindset? I mean, I personally practice, have you ever heard of The Miracle Morning?

I have, yeah. Yeah, it's how Elrod wrote that book. It's like a really quick read, but he just researched, you know,

the top seven, you know, things that that successful people do every morning.

And he came up with a you know a quick plan is like meditation and affirmations and visualizations and exercise reading and scribing and you know you can do it in as short as seven minutes you can do one minute of each or you can extend it out and that's what i personally do now and i just feel like even 10 minutes of just closing your eyes meditation you know it doesn't have to be like you're going into this deep zen place and if you're a mom, like that doesn't even exist, right?

You have to do it in the car. But it's like, it does matter. It does really, really help. So I would suggest that. And the Epsom salt baths, I think that helps a lot too.

Yeah. Super, super helpful. Wow. So there's so much that people can do apart from just the steroids. We do want to make sure people are consulting their physicians, making sure we get the right medical advice.

but it can be broader than that. And so there's many steps and it's great to have all this newer information that's come out, all these new scientific discoveries, all these things that we know are working now.

But I probably have some listeners that are like, okay, that's great, but what can I do right now? So to finish off this great, great conversation, what would you tell people who are like, great, we'll get to that?

Consistency, mindset, and daily habits

totally gonna do the process, but what are the things that can be done immediately and let's say in a severe flare? Zero processed food, zero. And I would add to that just any like, you know, there's like natural food chemicals in every food and it doesn't mean they're bad, but you know, things like chocolate and coffee and these other like types of foods that are just a little more aggravating to your system it would help to take those out for the time being and only put things on your skin that you could eat like doesn't mean that it would taste good but that it's edible that it's real whole ingredients that your body recognizes that isn't adding to your liver burden definitely do that and just start taking a look around your house so just if you can start doing one thing a day, open your window right now.

It's okay. It's the winter. Just still, I'm sure there's some time that you could have it open. Just those types of things. It makes a really big difference.

Absolutely. There's interventions that we can all do. And I know that it's such an inspiration for a lot of people to know that there are solutions to these chronic issues.

So I thank you so much for coming in on our podcast. And I know our listeners are very appreciative of all these tips, this expertise. And thank you so much.

Immediate steps for severe flares

Thanks for having me. Talk to you soon. Thanks for listening to Truly Healthy MD. I'm Dr. Monica Harry Yee, and I'm so glad you joined me today. Remember, your health is in your hands, and every choice, no matter how small, can move you closer to feeling your best.

If you found today's episode helpful, please subscribe, share, and leave a review. It means so much to me. Until next time, take care of yourself and stay truly healthy.