Healing Kids from the Inside Out: Gut Health, Nutrition & Preventing Chronic Illness Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Ultra-Processed Foods

And so we have to think what are ultra processed foods out there with my families, just understanding what are ultra processed foods. So I always explain it as when you go into the grocery store, they're usually the foods that are in the center aisle.

They're on the end caps of the aisle. They have bright packages that are kid friendly, have lots of colors. They're in the frozen food section, in the prepared meals, in the cereal aisles with the kids sugar sweetened cereals, the toaster pastries, the chip aisles.

Those are considered your ultra processed foods as well as many of your fast food entrees that you get. Welcome to Take Back My Brain with Lori Hammer, where real healing starts in the brain.

I'm Lori, a functional nutritionist and mom who's walked the path from anxiety and burnout to clarity and calm. Each week, we're going to dive into brain-based tools like amino acid therapy, gut health, fasting and faith to help you reclaim your energy, emotions and sense of self.

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to the podcast. Today, my guest is Lori Ryan, and we're going to talk about pediatric health and all things encompassing.

You're not going to want to miss this episode, so make sure you listen to the end so you get all the information that she has to offer.

Meet the Guest and Her Pediatric Wellness Journey

Lori is a registered nurse practitioner in the state of Iowa, and she's also a certified pediatric nurse practitioner and a nutritional health coach. So she's got all the areas covered, which is beautiful.

And she had her own crazy journey with her daughter, which is why she's so focused in the pediatric community. And so Lori, welcome to the podcast. Thank you, Lori, for having me here today.

I've been super excited to get to visit with you and your listening audience and to share with you my passion about pediatric health and wellness care.

So my background was primarily working at a primary tertiary care university health care system. And I had the privilege of working with an expert team of health care providers, loved working there.

did phenomenal things for little children there, but I always had to wonder what more can we be doing for these children, their families, so they don't have to be here in the hospital and have so many health care issues, be on so many medications.

that was driven home to me even more that by the time my daughter was four years old, she had had a life flight helicopter ride and ambulance ride and several hospitalizations.

And she received great medical care, but I just like, I don't want her to have to be on chronic medications and have chronic illness the rest of her life.

So I poured all my mom nurse energy into doing more continuing education within the nursing field and trying to focus on pediatric health and wellness care, preventative care, pediatric nutrition.

So a few years ago, my husband had a job change and we relocated back to Pella, Iowa, which is where I grew up. A wonderful community. If you haven't visited, please come and visit us.

The tools are amazing. Yes, it is. And so are the bakeries. Maybe not so healthy, but they smell good. So anyways, I wanted to think through what do I want to do with my nursing?

And I really wanted to focus on pediatric wellness care and health prevention and helping children with chronic illnesses in a better way. So I went back and took some more education getting my certified nutritional health coach and also doing functional medicine education through the Institute of functional medicine and clinical practice and clinical nutrition and took some more pediatric nutrition courses and pediatric functional meta.

medicine courses that were accredited so that I could help children more in that realm. So about two and a half years ago I started seeing patients with Wellness for Kids.

So I use telehealth via HIPAA compliant telehealth portal within the state of Iowa because that's where my nurse practitioner license it sure is through.

And I see children that struggle with different chronic illnesses like eczema and allergies, chronic tummy aches, tummy troubles, constipation, some ADHD nutritional approaches.

So I don't replace their primary care provider.

Why Kids Are Getting Sicker

I work alongside their primary care provider to try to work more closely with the patient and family to try to dig deeper to undermine what's going on underneath all of these issues.

What's the root cause? And trying to then work through that, address that with as much of a natural holistic approach as possible. Having a nurse practitioner that can come alongside families like you are, I think is such a gift.

So thank you for what you're doing. Speaking of the current state of the health of our country, especially our kids, I mean, our kids are sicker than they ever have been.

And how do you address that? I mean, does it get discouraging to you? Do you feel like there's hope coming around the corner? How do you see the state right now?

So it is really discouraging when we look at children because we think about they have their whole life ahead of them. We can really have this window of time to impact their life and their future.

And currently, about 50% of children in the United States are diagnosed with the chronic health conditions. And that's like 1 in 11 children have asthma, 1 in 5 eczema, 1 in 4 have recurrent ear infections, and 1 in 12 have food allergies.

And that doesn't include food sensitivities. And one in five has obesity and one in five has mental behavioral or neurocognitive disorder, including ADHD.

So we have to step back and we have to think, why is that? Why do we have this increase in children's health problems? And you know, I think there's a number of reasons.

And, you know, we have so many good health care facilities. We have good doctors, but this is still a problem. So what is it? Is it lifestyle? Is it environment, nutrition, stress, springtime, genetics?

I think probably all of those play an impact. And I try to address all of those areas when I work with families and children because they are all important.

But I really try to focus on nutrition because I think that's a huge problem in our children. So calories consumed does not equal nutrition. Right. So food is fuel for our kids' body.

And just like it's important to have good fuel, the right kind of fuel for our cars or trucks or tractors or lawnmowers or chainsaws or boats, we have to have the right kind of fuel for our children's bodies for them to grow and to learn to develop.

to have that resilience and that immune system that's working properly. And currently in the United States, 90% of children do not get the adequate amount of vegetables on any given day.

60% do not get the adequate amount of fruits. And a third of children eat a fast food meal on any given day. And two thirds of the calories that children or teens get come from ultra processed foods.

And so we have to think what are ultra processed foods. I start there with my families just understanding what are ultra processed foods. So I always explain it as when you go into the grocery store, they're usually the foods that are in the center aisle.

They're on the end caps of the aisle. They have bright packages that are kid friendly, have lots of colors. They're in the frozen food section, in the prepared meals, in the cereal aisles with the kids sugar sweetened cereals, the toaster pastries, the chip aisles.

Those are considered your ultra processed foods as well as many of your fast food entrees that you get. They just have so many preservatives and food additives, colors, those type of things that are in there.

Nutrition, Deficiencies, and the Microbiome

And so our kids are getting those calories. but they aren't getting the whole food nutrition that they need for their bodies to grow and develop normally.

Right, because your body doesn't know what to do with it. It's not actually food. Your body can't break it down. And then there's so many chemicals that are in those foods that trigger addictive behavior.

So then you want that food again and again and again. And that just keeps that autoimmune cycle, the gut cycle, the food sensitivity cycle going. And I know I work with a lot of families as well.

And they're like, well, the kid won't eat five foods. Yeah, I bet so, right? Because their gut is so inflamed and they're addicted to some of these foods because of the way they've been formulated.

And I believe that's a huge part of our ADHD crisis right now. What did you say? One in five kids are on a medication for that, right? And it just breaks my heart because they just really need good food.

And when you change their food a lot, maybe sometimes all of their symptoms will go away. I don't see all of them going away very often anymore, but the majority of the symptoms when you go back to that whole food diet, you take out the glutens and the dairies and just get them really good proteins and fats, their body can heal.

I mean, their little body knows what to do if we just give it the right nutrition. Hey friend, just a quick break to remind you if calming your brain is the missing piece in your practice or in your home, my Mind Thrive certification course teaches you exactly how to do that with targeted amino acid therapy.

So it's real science, real results, no band-aids. Enrollment is now open. Link is in the show notes. So back to the show. Right. It is fun working with kids because their bodies do heal quicker.

Their cells turn over quicker. And I even tell parents, your body turns over its taste buds every 90 days. So your kids can develop new tastes. But if you continue to give them those tastes of all the ultra processed foods, that's what their taste buds learn.

And that's what they want to eat more and more of. The most common insufficiencies I see in children is vitamin D. And here in Iowa, in the northern latitude, between the months of probably the end of September to sometime in April, our kids just do not get enough vitamin D for sunlight.

So we have to supplement that for them to be healthy. And that's so important for their health as well. Magnesium is a big one because kids just do not eat their fruits and vegetables.

And magnesium is found in a lot of fruits and vegetables and leafy greens and omega-3 fatty acids. If children are not eating like four servings of fatty fish a week, they really are not getting enough omega-3 fatty acids, which is hugely important for kids to have healthy brains.

stink, iron, and again, that healthy fiber that they're lacking. You know, I tell parents, kids don't have a Miralax deficiency. They have a deficiency, a fiber in their diet.

So yes, there can be other reasons for constipation as well, but diet is a big part of it. Diet's a huge part of it. Yeah. How about the microbiome? I mean, that's a really big buzzword right now.

Let's talk about children's microbiome and how to kind of shift that. Yeah. So when children are born, there's actually research that is differing a little bit right now.

Initially they thought when children were born they didn't have a microbiome. It was just obtained through passing through the vaginal canal during birth.

Now they're thinking that there may be some microbiome within the mother's womb that is passed on to the child even before birth. But primarily it is through the birth process and then as the child starts eating breast eating food or the breast milk and the formula, that is where they start getting that.

And of course formula does not pass on the healthy probiotics that mother's breast milk do. So breast is always best when that is possible. But usually the first few months of life, it's primarily bifidobacteria species that colonize the child's gastrointestinal tract.

And then as they start to eat more, foods, finger foods, that type of thing, their microbiome continues to develop. And it really continues to develop through those first four years.

And by the time they're somewhere between that four to five years age, they start developing a more adult-like microbiome. And then in the teenage years is when they have the most robust microbiome.

And then as we get older, that starts to decline again. So we do have, again, that great window of opportunity of building the children's microbiome. And 70% to 80% of the immune system lies in the microbiome.

And again, the microbiome, if you're not familiar with it, I explain it to parents and families and little kids. It's the teeny tiny friends in your tummy.

So our gastrointestinal tract, as the majority of our microbiome, but we also have a microbiome in our ears, on our skin, in our lungs, other parts of our bodies.

But primarily it's in our gastrointestinal tract and we have to have the proper balance of the good healthy bacteria compared to the unhealthy bacteria.

And that needs to be somewhere between 80 to 85% healthy bacteria.

Food Sensitivities and Allergy Treatment

so that it can be a properly functioning immune system. And when we don't have the proper foods to eat, it doesn't feed the healthy bacteria. It doesn't feed those tiny friends in our tummies.

So when we eat the sugary sweet things, that feeds the bad bacteria. When we eat the good diverse rainbow of colors of fruits and vegetables, that feeds those tiny friends to help us to be healthy.

And it also produces many of our neurotransmitters in our body, so including our GABA, our serotonin and dopamine. It's really important in that. It's key in recurrent frequent infections, autoimmune diseases, food sensitivities.

It's responsible for a lot of those tummy troubles and constipation and autoimmunity. There's a pathway between the brain and the gut via the vagus nerve, which is the 10th cranial nerve.

And there's constant crosstalk between the brain and the intestinal tract with those microbiomes. So it is so important to focus on for children. Right.

So how are you helping families to work on that microbiome? So we always start, food is first. So we always go through, I help them to do a little diet history so I know kind of where they're at with their foods.

And then we talk about the foods, we talk about the vitamins and minerals and what are in the foods and how to incorporate those in the diet and just even simple substitutions like talking about yogurt, like yogurt has good live probiotics in it if you get a good kind.

But most parents give their children the little fruited containers of yogurt, which really have a really lot of sugar in it. So when you think about it, all of the added sugar kind of cancels out the healthy part of the probiotic.

So I always say to start switching over by getting the big container. of the plain yogurt that's not vanilla flavored. It's plain yogurt and don't get the kind that say zero sugar added because those usually have artificial sweeteners which can be even more problematic.

But get the big container of the plain yogurt and then a little container of maybe the strawberry yogurt or whatever flavor you want. Mix that in to help your child to transition that flavor, that taste.

And then add some fresh fruit. And then you can just wean off of that and just do the plain yogurt and blend in your own fresh fruit. You can make some healthy granola to put on top of it.

And it can be a great substitution. So just thinking through some substitutions, getting kids involved in grocery shopping and meal preparation, that type of thing to help them work with that.

And then I do that testing on my kiddos. So I do functional medicine testing. to see kind of where their gut is at as far as how healthy it is. And then we can develop a plan for there.

If we need to address that further, then I can work with them on some different supplements and some different probiotics to help restore that gut health.

And I always say probiotics are kind of like dogs. different breeds of dogs. You don't get a chihuahua for a hunting dog and you don't get a Labrador Retriever for a lap dog.

And that's the same way it is with probiotics. You have to have the right probiotic to deal with what you're dealing with or it may not be the one that's going to be helpful for your child.

So I work that through with them and how to address the gut through supplementation, through diet, that type of thing. Nice. You do a lot of, what is it?

Sublingual immunotherapy for like food sensitivities or allergies and stuff, is that correct? So for food allergies, so a lot of my patients that I work with, they have different immune challenges and we always work with their diet first and building up their immune system, supporting their immune system.

But if they have a true IgE allergy, like an allergy to pollen or grasses, or a true IgE food allergy, then those are really hard to get rid of with even good nutrition.

Yes, it can be helpful and there can be some supplements that can help with that, but those allergies tend to want to persist. So how can we address those from more of a root cause method?

And that's where subliminal and immunotherapy comes in beautifully. So it has been around for about 100 years in the United States. It is very well researched through Cochrane Research Studies.

It is approved through the World Health Organization as a viable, effective, and safe alternative to allergy treatment and healthcare quality research that has done reviews and studies.

So it's very well researched and very effective. So it uses the same FDA approved allergen extract that is like an allergy shots and it works in a similar way.

It helps retrain the body not to react to an allergen. So it kind of desensitizes the same way allergy shots do, but instead it's drops under the tongue.

So you take them three times a day and it's specific to your allergy. So it is prescription. So we do IgE. allergy testing first, blood work to see what for sure the child is allergic to, and we dose that depending on how allergic the child is to that substance.

And I actually collaborate with Allergy Choices out of La Crosse, Wisconsin, and they partner with Allergy Associates of La Crosse, Wisconsin, which is an internationally known allergy clinic that works with children that have difficult to control allergies.

So I collaborate with them to offer the prescription allergy choices extract. And then I follow the children because I would refer kids there to Wisconsin, but a lot of my patients had insurance that wouldn't allow them to go out of state.

So this gives them an opportunity to utilize that and still use it within their home state. That's a wonderful resource. I've had a couple clients take their children over to Wisconsin and had really, really great results.

So it's nice to know that you're in Iowa doing that as well. Yes. So food sensitivities are a little different. Food sensitivities are IgG-mediated. They are not IgE-mediated.

They're a more delayed reaction, but they are an immune reaction and they can really be problematic for children and really can cause difficulties. They aren't as well researched as IgE allergies and the testing isn't as well researched as the IgE testing, but they have some newer methods out now that are just much more accurate.

And I find that they can be very helpful to test children for IgG sensitivities and then work with them with the food elimination diet if needed. And so we can do that for a period of time, then we can reintroduce the food and oftentimes we can reintroduce the food.

But usually the food sensitivities come because the microbiome isn't healthy. So just eliminating foods that your child is sensitive to, it may help with that food.

Healing the Gut and Supporting Families

But long term, if we're not fixing the gut, they're going to develop likely more and more food sensitivities. Yup, that's what I see too. Yeah, so the lining and intestinal tract and that small intestine is very, very thin and very permeable.

And those cells have to be very tight together. It's called tight cell junctions. And when The immune system in the intestinal tract is not healthy, and there's those bad bacteria in there.

They kind of want to leach onto that intestinal lining and poke little holes in there, so to speak. And so then that food isn't properly digested can leach through that.

And so these improperly undigested proteins can then enter the bloodstream. And the body says, no, this isn't healthy for me. I need to react to this.

So it can cause difficulties. So we really have to heal that lining of that gut. Yeah. And I think a lot of people don't understand that. They think, well, if I just take out the food.

know, then it shouldn't be an issue anymore. But in fact, you do have to dive a little bit deeper and heal the gut. It'll never be perfect because we don't live in that perfect world, but you can make things a lot better.

I know for myself and my kids with the celiac disease, we can heal our celiac disease. But if you go back to eating and you're not, if you go back to eating all the gluten, And then if you develop leaky gut again, that celiac disease can come back.

So some of these lifestyle changes just have to be part of who you are. They are. They are. And I always tell patients, it's not usually just one thing that is causing them health issues.

It's usually several things, and it's kind of like the barges going down the Mississippi River. They have cargo on them, and they can have so much cargo on them and still float.

But if you put too much cargo on them, they sink. And that's what happens with our little kids' bodies. If they're getting multiple things thrown on them at once, they have too much stress, they have a poor diet, they have some allergies, other things, then their little boat sinks and we have to start offloading all that cargo to get their little boat to float again.

Or another way I explain it is if you're sitting on five tacks, it hurts. If you pull out three tacks and you only have two tacks left, it's still going to hurt.

So that's part of what I do as a practitioner is we look and do the detective work is what are those tacks? Or what are those extra cargo on those barges?

And how can we get rid of those and offload those or minimize them so that we can get those children back into a healthier position? Right. If there was one thing you would want to say to parents, what would it be?

Be willing to invest in your child's health. You know, I so often see parents who feel like they're showing love to their children by investing in all the new technology for them or the best sports gear or the coolest trendy clothes, but those things are only temporary.

Their health they take through them through their lifespan. And it is a long-term investment. So being willing to invest in their child's health, because it can make such a difference.

We have this window of time to give them a healthy start to life, and that's so important. That is so good, Lori. Where can people find you? So I have a website, it's wellnessforkids.net and the Wellness Four is the number four.

So yes, that's a great place to find me. I'm on Facebook, I'm on Instagram. So yes. Can you do telehealth from other states or are you just in Iowa? I'm just in Iowa because of my nurse practitioner license is only within Iowa.

So yes, I just do within Iowa. So I love little kids. I have a passion for healthcare and their families. As mom, I remember feeling very alone walking that journey with a daughter that had chronic health issues.

And so I really try to be there for hope and encouragement for families as we walk together on that health journey. Yeah, I wish I would have somebody like you when my kids were little.

We walked it and we did fine, but it would have been nice to have somebody really walk alongside us the whole way. So thank you for what you're doing, Laurie.

Yes, thank you. It's a pleasure to be here today. Awesome. And thank you everyone for listening. Make sure you like, subscribe, share. And if you feel led to, I would love you to leave a review.

on Spotify or Apple for me, that would mean the world to me. So have an amazing day, God bless you, and I will see you on the next episode. Thanks for listening to Take Back My Brain.

If today's episode helped you connect with hope or direction, I want you to follow the show, leave us a review, and share it with someone who needs it.

And if you're ready to start your own healing journey, explore our courses and our coaching programs at lorihammer.com backslash store. So until next time, remember you cannot medicate away a nutrient deficiency and healing your brain isn't just possible, it's powerful.

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