Helping Families Reduce Childhood Eczema Triggers Transcript

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Introduction and guest background

A lot of people are like, I have so many patients that they can't, the children with eczema cannot tolerate stuff on their skin. They'd be, everything burns, water burns air burns wind burns.

Sometimes we don't even use anything on there because it's so painful. We just work with the inside because the staff lives here. we rebalance that here, we decrease it on the insight, less of it coming outside.

All of a sudden we have less red itchy skin without having to put any topicals on. Welcome to the Integrative Medicine Roundtable, where practitioners lead, brought to you by the North Carolina Integrated Medical Society, join integrative health care leaders, clinicians and innovators as they share practical insights, emerging research, and the conversations shaping the future of patient care.

Hello, this is the Integrative Medicine Roundtable where practitioners lead. I'm Dr. Lisa Broyles, board member with NCIMS, and I have the privilege to interview Dr Anna Maria Temple, MD.

So she is a holistic pediatrician and an expert in eczema. Hey guys, I'm so excited to be here. I am Dr. Anna Maria Temple. My specialty is eczema and my mission is to help families raise healthy kids with less medications.

So I can't wait for this interview and get a little bit deeper into what exema is and how should we be thinking about it. Yeah. So my question is, eczema rates continue to rise.

I mean, I know as a family medicine practitioner, i am just seeing cases explode. Can you talk to us about what your evidence-based holistic approach is?

Yeah, and you know, uh, I've observed the same thing and the data supports that. In 1970, the rates of ectoma were one in 15. Today, the rates are one and five.

And I will argue that number is lower than it should be because a lot of Western traditional doctors will dismiss eczema as a normal part of childhood.

So true. Chronic disease is not a normally part childhood, but because it is considered normal, they're not going to report it as chronic disease, so therefore those numbers are not seen.

Also, traditional docs are like, well, it's fine because kids are going to outgrow eczema.

Eczema trends and clinical research

So then it is not considered a chronic disease if you are just going out grow it. That brings into the numbers. I don't think that the number are accurate.

There is probably even more people with ectoma than we see in the literature. Well, doctors are all about numbers and I hear that you just did a study on exima.

Can you tell us about that? I'm so excited. One of the things when I started on this journey was people were like, well, there's no evidence behind it.

And even though we have evidence, behind vitamin D and zinc and omega threes and probiotics and eczema, traditional doctors still like but where is the evidence?

So because of all of that and all, and we want to make, push medicine forward, we did a clinical research study

where we enrolled 197 families and did nutritional changes and supplementation over a six-month period, and we showed a 53% reduction in eczema symptoms in six months.

Wow, that is so significant. That's got to be comparable to the rates of some of the big drugs out there. Yeah, actually, we are performing better than Dupixent in the clinical trials.

And we have the same number of patients in their trials, so we're very comparable. So it's not like they had thousands. They have under 200 patients and their And so our data is really strong and I was so pumped because now when people go, there's no data behind this, I'm like, let me show you a study published in 2026. Yes, we've got a good solid study here showing that integrative medical approaches work.

When you actually listen to the body and you look at what's deficient, what colonizing the skin, right? I listened to your lecture yesterday and as a practitioner, i was unaware just how much staph aureus affected eczema.

Yes. Tell me a little bit about that. Absolutely. So a lot of times, well, most people usually go with eczema. They're like, what lotion should I get?

How many lotions? And I always tell people, I'm like if you've spent over $500 in looking for lotion, you don't have a lotion deficiency. And the reason that part of the issue is we have to focus on the skin microbiome.

as we heal from within. And one of the issues of skin microbiome that 90% of people with eczema are over-colonized by Staph aureus, which means they have way too much Staphorus because compared to Staf epi or other bacteria than our skin.

We know that for every one human cell, we have 10 bacterial cells, so we're like only 10% human. So we are never going to get rid of bacteria on our skin.

We need to rebalance it. And one of the things that Staph aureus loves is a skin pH of 7.0. It is misunderstanding in the world that we need work at a neutral pH inside our body, yes.

On the outside of our bodies, We want a Skin pH 5.5. Nobody I don't think I didn't know this has an MD. I think that this is incredible information So when we buy a cream over-the-counter does that cream number one address that boy?

I know that it addresses ceramides that say or addresses moisturizer But that's not simply enough because we are not dealing with rebalancing the microbiome.

So we want to look at a topical treatment or intervention that's going to decrease the pH to a 5.

Skin microbiome and hypochlorous acid

5 and reduce staph aureus colonization while promoting healthy bacteria. Because again, we got to work on the balance to increase the topical reaction to the irritation and scratching that we see.

Okay. So what do you recommend to decreased skin pH? It's a hypochlorous acid. If we're going take one takeaway today is no more bleach baths. Bleach is toxic to the body.

We do not want to put bleach in baby's baths. And the data behind bleach bath is so weak. So it blows my mind that it's still the most highly recommended modality and the traditional allergist and dermatologist practices.

So no more bleach baths. We're going to use hypochlorous acid. There are many different formulations between 0.22 and 0,17% sprays and gels. You can spray the children, the babies, it doesn't matter, pregnant mamas, from head to toe.

So can patients buy that over the counter? Absolutely. And there's different formulations. There's active skin repair.

All starts right with a human microbiome because we know that eczema is an issue from the inside out and we see the Staph aureus on the outside and therefore we're looking at outside issues when in fact it's an inside.

Staphorus lives inside our bodies. It lives in our gut and because our guts is imbalanced, We have an overpopulation of Staph aureus in our gut, which comes out of our nose, out our mouth, our butts and our vaginas and causes problems.

So if we work on decreasing it on the outside and inside, because it's not enough if you just do it outside, we've got to decrease on inside and rebalance it, then we're going to have less stuff coming out because you can never get rid of staph.

So this isn't something that you just get from a… I get all the time, oh, I must have sat on a public toilet. I'm like, no, this actually probably was living inside of you and Staph aureus love sugar.

And if you eat too much sugar, you're feeding that Staphorius, which is then causing problems inside and out. Absolutely, and on that caveat, yeast also loves sugar and other bacteria, Klebsiella, Proteus.

And again, it's always like, you know, people are like what about the parasites? I was like y'all, before we get down the, off the rails, I'm like we, what are we putting in our bodies?

The most important part of our foundation is what we put in our body, starting with processed foods, how much processed food we're eating. The BHA, the BHT artificial food dyes, artificial preservatives, food coloring, all that affects our skin.

And then we talk about sugar. If we have more than 24 grams of added sugar per day, if you're over two years old, that feeds the salivaries, you can do all the things on the skin.

You can take antifungals. If you don't address the nutrition and we still have tons of yeast and processed foods, those bacteria come back over and over again.

So you said less than twenty four grams. Added sugar a day. And if they're under two. So no maple sugar, no honey, No juices. And you know, people are like, we do not need added sugar in our life.

That's just commercial. Like if you look at a kid's product, like a kids protein bar or a Kids cereal or kids dairy free milk. the number one ingredient is added sugar.

So we know that children are targeted because sugar is easy and the kids will do it.

Diet, sugar, and plant diversity

But it's not in their best interest and it is not easy long term because now you give them all the sugar when they're young, you've got to undo all of the damage when the older.

I think along those lines, You mentioned plant bites in your lecture yesterday. Can you talk to us about plant bite? Yeah. Because parents know, that Children should eat more fruits and vegetables.

Fruits are easy for a lot of kids. Vegetables are hard. And parents get really discouraged. They're like, ah, we have to eat more plants. So I created this from actually the doctor that wrote the book Fiber Fueled.

He named it Plan Points. It's a super easy way of approaching plant diversity because one plan point is one strawberry. A giant bowl of strawberries is still one plant point.

Okay. But if we did a strawberry, a blueberry, fruit cup, you have five or six plant points. And that makes it more tolerable for picky eaters, selective eatters, and for parents, because now they don't have to battle a bowl a broccoli.

So one bite of broccoli, one stick carrot stick. Yes. One stick of a cucumber. This even one bit of cucumber, the more we eat that. Here's the interesting thing.

Number two things. Our taste buds change every 30 days. So every thirty days, a third of our taste, but change, die and new ones we get in 90 days you have all new tastebuds.

Okay. If you were to replace dairy or replace gluten or whatever, start introducing cucumbers, if you keep at it, the taste but start changing and they adjust to the food you eat.

Sure. One more thing. taste buds depend on the bacteria in our gut. So if, let's say, a child, lets use my children when they were younger, eat Pop-Tarts and Toaster Strudels and Lucky Charms and Cinnamon Toast Crunch, their bacteria on their gut love sugar and they're going to create signals to the brain and to taste bud, give me more sugar.

Now the child craves more. The bacteria that love Sugar hate vegetables because vegetables are bitter. So the more sugar we eat, the More dairy gluten we, The more we crave sweet carby things.

And so, and the, more, we reject plants with a plan point challenge. If you take a bite of broccoli, a bit of carrots, A bite Of cucumber, And I encourage everyone to not peel their carrots.

Don't peel your cucumbers because the bacteria that love cucumbers and carrots live on the outside of the plant. but don't peel them. Correct. Buy them organic and dont peel.

Now when the child just takes one bite, that cared-loving bacteria goes in the belly. That pepper- loving bacteria jumps in belly over time and exposure.

And now you've reduced your added sugar. You've removed the processed foods. So the bacteria that loves those leaves. They die. they poop them out. so they're gone.

now the vegetable loving bacterias slowly get trickled in. The signals to the brain are different. The signals to the taste buds are different. We know the tastes buds change.

And over a three months, six month, nine month period, because it's not easy, all of a sudden the child is no longer rejecting vegetables as much. It's a slow process, people.

Slow process. Yes, but it is possible for your picky eater to become less picky over time. There is hope. Yeah. When my warrior parents are determined to make change, The children generally don't have driver's licenses and they don' have money.

So the only people are providing them with Lucky Charms and Cinnamon Toast Crunch and Goldfish are the parents. I used to call myself a drug dealer. Because when I realized, I'm like, wait a minute, this is all me.

This is on me! You know, they're not doing it. But over time, we can change. And by changing to more plan points, We increase gut diversity. When we increase got diversity, we heal the skin from within.

Yes, probiotics and instead of having all this inflammatory bacteria and staph and yeast that love sugar, the more plant points that we get, more diverse our diet, then we actually get healthy bacteria inside so your brain gets retrained by your gut and then your taste buds change and you're actually okay with eating broccoli.

Correct. And your skin gets better. Correct, and you know, a lot of people are like, well, you have so many patients that they can't, the children with eczema cannot tolerate stuff on their skin.

They'd be, everything burns, water burns air burns wind burns. Sometimes we don't even use anything on there because it's so painful. We just work with the inside because the staff lives here.

we rebalance that here, we decrease it on the insight, less of it coming outside. All of a sudden we have less red itchy skin without having to put any topicals on.

Brilliant. So what would you tell clinicians as a takeaway, if we've read your study, heard your lecture, of what's the best way for us to treat eczema for our patients?

There's a few simple things that if we did them from the right when eczema begins, not wait and see how this is going to play out. So the most common time that ectoma starts is between three and six months of age.

Okay. If let's say a six month old comes in and they have exima, if can just get a dietary history for mama if she's nursing or discuss what formula they're taking.

if mama is nursing, we're going remove processed foods, reduce her added sugar to less than 24 grams a day.

Practical treatment takeaways for families

about increase her plan points replace her dairy and gluten we did those if the child is doing formula we're gonna come off a dairy formula and no not goat milk because all dairy is a problem for inflammation we are going to go to a broken down formula my favorite is hip HA combiotic it's a European formula And then we're going to check the child's vitamin D levels, CBC with diff, and zinc RBC.

If we just did those, because there is a huge correlation in the medical data in our clinical study on vitamin Z depletion and then replenishment with a decrease in eczema severity.

And then we add a multi-strand probiotic that has L-Ramnussis, L Rutteri, and L Fermenterum. Let's throw in some Bifidol Infantis and Brevet, maybe a little Longham.

If we just do those simple things and give it a little bit of time, majority of children with eczema are gonna decrease their inflammation, their allergic march cascade is going to significantly reduce, and we will have to use less biologics and have go into more invasive, shall we say, or more complex functional medicine protocols.

I think that this is really revolutionary care for eczema. It's fabulous. Instead of just giving these kids rounds and rounds of steroids, anointments that aren't really working and are burning, you're actually addressing the root cause of what's causing their exema in the first place, which is what every parent wants.

And I when children get old enough to make that correlation between that sugar and their skin, they stop eating sugar. Correct. I know my daughter experienced that around eight years old and started breaking out an eczema at the age of eight.

And we discovered, oh, let's cut out the sugar. My goodness, the skin clears up and my daughters packs her own lunches for school and she packs healthy lunch.

There's the seaweed packets and the carrot sticks. It's because she doesn't want her exema to come back and knows what caused it. I love it, I loved it.

Now here's the other question I usually get, what if my child doesn't want to do any of that? What if they're eight and they don't wanna do that. I always say, well then we're not putting any topical lotions, you're buying anything, we just give empathy.

I know this is horrible. I Know you're itchy. You know what you have to do. We cannot give them a way out So, I mean that sounds really cruel and mean it we need natural consequences I'm not gonna fight with an eight-year-old that's gonna go and eat Oreos and Doritos and drink Gatorade at school and then come home and complain and that I am researching and I trying to give you vitamin D They spit it out on the way to school.

They're eating what? You're not ready for it. At eight, you are old enough to make a decision. I want this to be

better or I don't care. And it is your right to say, I Don't Care.

But we're now going to spend money on interventions. We're just going chill. Let them suffer. Yeah, i'm old school. Well, I think that's important because there is a correlation for consequences and we need to teach them at a young age.

Correct. You know, when my boys had started having acne and they were like 14 and 15 and is there more a bigger no at all than a 15 year old male? No.

And they're like, we're not going to do the dumb things you say. And I was like Mara. But what cream can I use for acne? I'm like there's no cream. Well, can use a face wash?

There's not facewash. You know what you have to know, I am not gonna tell you. I let it go, and I said nothing. This is hard to watch. One day each one of them at different times, they were like, yeah, I'm like wow, your skin looks better.

They're like I stopped eating dairy. I stop eating Doritos. And they'll be like. Yeah. All right. So once they've made the food changes, then we were, like…

I am happy to help you now because I feel like we're on the same page. Otherwise, you keep buying more lotions, You keep buy more potions. You buy, more supplements.

you see another specialist and you go around in a circle getting more frustrated. but the human is not doing what they need to do in front of you because you cannot out supplement a diet that doesn't fit the body.

Older kids, behavior change, and stress management

And I think people feel powerless when diseases happen or when their skin is rashy and it's so important with middle school and teenagers heading into puberty that that acne, that self-esteem is critical at that period of time and to give them something that is within their power to change if they would just understand what you're eating is causing that acne.

The pizza and the hot dogs and processed foods you are consuming is making that acne flare, making the eczema flare. I think that they will stop. How many…

I have a teenage boy who went through the same thing where, oh, my friend has all kinds of acne and I don't. What's the difference? It's our diet, right?

Right. But it's so empowering. My mission is to inspire, educate and empower kids and families. When you, the person, realize that X causes Y and you have the power to say yes or no, then all of a sudden you're like, wait a minute, I can say, yes, or, no to my eczema.

And that's a choice that I make. It didn't happen to me. Yes, a three month old, we can, We don't have time. That's another podcast on three months. But when you Have older kids that there's A direct correlation and they see it and They choose Then my college kid, when he realized the relation between stress and eczema, he was like, and now I have a nighttime routine to de-stress because I've seen it that when I manage my stress response, my eczema is better, I'm going to have college exams, i'm gonna have to look for a job, I have look to for internships, that's always gonna happen.

How do I respond to it? My skin tells me that I am not regulated. Yes, our skin is our largest immune organ. Correct. And I no longer have remind him about it because he's realized the power of his own body and his choices.

Well, I think that what you're doing is empowering patients and it's empowering clinicians like myself so that we can help our patients. Thank you so much for your time.

Thanks for joining us on the Integrative Medicine Roundtable where practitioners lead. If you found value in today's conversation, follow our podcast, share it with a colleague, or visit us at ncintegrative.org and join our community today.

We'll see you at the next roundtable.