Introduction and Skin Comfort Trio

Hey team, welcome back. If your child is in that phase where they just cannot stop scratching, like you're in the cycle of flare, calm, flare again, and you feel like your doing everything right, but their skin is still red and irritated, keeping them up at night and keeping you up night, start with the Skin Comfort Trio, friends.

This is what I used when two of my kids were in a thick of severe, severe eczema. It helped bring their skins back to that soft calm place where the could finally sleep and just be comfortable again.

And even now, we still use the cream and oil to keep their skin healthy. And the spray for things like bug bites or irritation that pops up, it just gives their skincare a break.

It gives the skin some space to actually start to repair. That matters because when the skincare is constantly flared, its really hard to make progress anywhere else.

Its not the full solution, but it is the first step. You can grab that now in the show notes. Now, most parents I talked to already know that eczema runs deeper than the skin because you don't go through sleepless nights and constant itching and all the changes you've made and still feel stuck without realizing there's something much more going on underneath.

So I'm super excited, friends. Today I am joined by Dr. Darren Ingalls. He's a naturopathic doctor with over 30 years of experience specializing in immunology and chronic immune dysfunction.

And in this conversation, we talk about the deeper patterns behind eczema and what he looks for when a child presents with chronic immune activity and how infections and allergens and toxins can be driving the inflammation that you're seeing on your child's skin.

So this is a really enlightening conversation friends. If you've ever felt like you are doing everything and just not getting to the root of it, this conversational really help you connect some dots.

So let's get into it. Is your child struggling with itchy nights and endless flare ups? I'm Andrea McHugh, mom of four and host of Eczema Kids. Here, you'll find natural solutions that actually work so you can heal your childhood eczemat without steroids, without the overwhelm, and finally see calm, healthy skin again.

Let's Get Into It. Well, hi, Dr. Ingalls. Welcome to the show. Oh, well, thank you for having me. I really appreciate you being here. Oh, my pleasure.

I'm really excited for this conversation today because you've been practicing naturopathic and environmental medicine for over 30 years and working with kids and adults with really complex stuff, everything from Lyme and allergies and asthma to PANS and chronic infections and autoimmune inflammation.

And on top of that, you also walked through your own recovery with Lymedisease, which clearly shapes how you think about healing now. So I wanted to start there and zoom out for a second.

When you're in your practice and sitting across from somebody with eczema or chronic immune reactivity, and if it's a child with their parents as well who are just honestly doing everything that they know how to do, what's that first pattern that you start looking for and why does that matter so much as to whether that child actually gets better long-term?

Yeah, I mean, that's a great question. And of course, for every certainly child with eczema, it can be different things.

Dr. Ingalls on Eczema Root Causes

But I think the one red line that tends to run through everybody who's dealing with certainly exima, there's some element of immune dysfunction. Eczema falls under this umbrella, what we call the atopic triad or the Atopic Marge.

It starts with eczima, goes on to allergic rhinitis and sometimes asthma. So it's really looking at what are those foundational things that have disrupted the immune system in the first place that kind of set off that cascade that allows for the skin to become inflamed.

And again, it really is an inflammatory condition. It's interesting. If you talk about the 30,000-foot view, if you look at all inflammatory conditions, regardless of whether it's heart disease or eczema or multiple sclerosis, we're always looking at that overarching pattern of what is it that's causing inflammation?

What are those factors? You can boil it down to really three things, I think. It is infection, it is allergen, and it has toxin. And it's usually one of those threes that become one those big mast cell drivers.

We've heard so much in the last certainly decade about MCAS or mast-cell activation syndrome. And certainly to a great extent eczema plays a part in that because often mast cells are involved in breaking the skin down, causing the inflammation.

So again, if we kind of then hone in a little bit more through the microscope and start looking at what are those individual factors that are causing inflammation, you know, that's where we can start to lay out a path of what we need to do for each person to start getting their skin to heal.

that's a great place to start. So if you're thinking that this situation is more infection-based, what would you start to see, start notice that might make you segue toward that way, and then what types of things do you implement to get over it?

Well, infection-based, I mean, just now looking at, are there other things that go along with the eczema? I means, these are kids who are getting sick all the time.

Are they getting recurrent ear infections? Are the getting strep throat? These are the kids with a constant swollen tonsils and the constant sore throats and constant drippy nose.

You know, when you start to see really anything chronic, you know particularly in a young child, that should be a red flag that there's something persistent there that just isn't going away.

You know, for the kids with the seasonal allergies or the season things, you know they come in and out of it. They have symptoms for a handful of days and then just kind of clears up on its own without really any major intervention.

But when you see this pattern happening over and over, and it really never goes away and there's no real pattern to it, again, that would be a red flag that there is some underlying infection.

And I might even go back a step further, especially in children. When I see kids who are getting sick frequently, it always makes me think of allergy.

You know, if you think about what allergy as a whole does, I mean, allergy creates clear fluid. The kid with the chronic, snotty, runny nose and the dark circles under the eyes and drippy eyes, and itchy eyes.

All that clear, fluid becomes the perfect breeding ground for infection. I was a microbiologist before I became a doctor and you know bugs don't grow in dry environments.

Right. Kind of simple. So if you can dry up the nose and the throat and lungs and skin and whatever other tissue that might be a little oversaturated, you kind of selectively starve a lot of these microbes from being able to thrive to

go on to cause these persistent or recurrent infections.

So, you know, step one for me is always really kind of looking at the allergy piece, just because A, I think it's the most common and it is also something that I thing is one of the easier things to treat.

Well, how do you get over, say, cyclically getting ear infections or staph infections? Are you able to get things like that without antibiotics? Absolutely.

I mean, for kids who actually do get infection, active infection.

Infections, Allergies, and Gut Health

There's a lot of great natural things we can do to treat infection in 26 years of practice, I've probably written less than 10 prescriptions for ear infection for antibiotics.

You know, we've got great natural things like garlic mullein, ear drops work really well and onion earmuffs and cold wet sock treatment and these things are kind of sound like old wives tales actually work well.

And the kids are fine respond very well to homeopathics and herbs. A lot of herbs we use help fight infection. They help support the immune system. Sometimes they help with lymphatic drainage.

So again, we can select different things to help encourage better drainage out of the head and neck. Again, that fluid clears out. And again a lot these infections, particularly they're viral, tend to be relatively self-limiting.

We really just need to support body to get through it on its own. In most cases, again there's a lots of things we could do to over that infection without necessarily having to use antibiotics.

So for me, antibiotics are kind of worst case scenario. Yeah, agreed. I mean, and usually I feel like it's the kids in this boat that have already gone through however many cycles of antibiotics, right?

Like their gut is just already. Right. And you know, we can't talk about eczema skin without talking about the gut. The gut is so intimately involved with our skin.

I mean, you and I know dermatologists don't really recognize that connection, but we see it all the time. It can be anything from food allergies to dysbiosis to yeast overgrowth.

So, you know, we're constantly looking at the microbiome. We're looking the gut. we are looking a the barrier. Is there anything that's been disrupted?

I mean, I can just think about my own personal history as a kid. I was an ear infection kid, and my mom tells me I started with my first infection when I a month or two old.

Had inner functions probably once a months for the first five years of my life. Eventually had to put the tubes in my ears, had my tonsils taken out. And after that, the infection stopped.

But I mean, all those antibiotics for the first five years of my life, what did that do to my gut microbiome? What did do that may have played out to what I experienced today?

I don't really know the truth, but I worry about that when kids are on a lot of antibiotics at such a young age, when we know that their gut and their microbiomes are so sensitive and susceptible, are we potentially setting the stage for other chronic conditions that might pop up 10, 20 years down the line?

Unfortunately, yes, I mean, it's just been my experience as well. But if that's the boat you're in, right, you can't do anything about the past, but now you know better and your kid has been having this experience and now they're three, four, five, six years old, what can you start to do to start rebuild that delicate microbiome?

Well, I think, you know, the beauty of being human is that it's built in our DNA to heal. And particularly for guts, for kids and their guts. You know this is a tissue that has relatively high turnover, which we need to repair relatively quickly.

So I thing step A is, we know we to stop the influx of things that are breaking potentially down the gut barrier. Whether that's food allergies, whether it is environmental exposures, something they're ingesting or whatever.

And then, you know, we've got good labs to do stool testing that we can at least get a snapshot into what's going on in the gut. Are we seeing inflammation?

Are are we see overgrowth of yeast? are are seeing maldigestion that they're just not breaking their food substances down? And I like that because it gives us actionable information that can use with kids.

Because again, I'm not really a big fan of just throwing a bunch of pills at kids and see what sticks. I want to know that whatever we're doing has a purpose.

So I think, you know, checking the gut is helpful. And then my first stuff I said is I was always looking at allergy and, my experience with eczema, I find the overwhelming majority of kids have some element of food sensitivity.

and by addressing that I've seen the vast majority my kids with Eczem clear their skin up by just, either avoiding the food they're eating the sensitive or using some of immunotherapy.

So we do a lot of immuno therapy in our office and the concept is kind of like allergy shots. You know, you go to a conventional allergist and they do skin prick testing on your child or blood testing.

It's really great if you're trying to pick up the true anaphylactic food allergy, which fortunately that's not what most kids experience. More often what they have is what we call food sensitivity, Which is often a delayed response to the food.

And unfortunately, you know, as a parent, if you write down everything your child eats, and even for kids, we'll eat this very small number of foods, it could be that one food that's just enough that they have it frequently that it keeps that perpetual inflammatory process going on and therefore the skin never really gets a chance to heal.

So, looking at food sensitivities and implementing some element of immunotherapy, I found to be incredibly helpful. So if your kid is presenting with more of a toxin-based eczema, like you mentioned, mold and things like that, what kind of symptoms would you likely see if that's the case?

Well, I think about for mold, and mycotoxin specifically, you know, a mold again can be a major contributor to exima. I've also seen often a lot of other upper respiratory things.

These are the kids with the chronic cough, the chronch congestion, and the cronic stuffy nose. Not the clear stuff that comes out very easily. The stuff always seems to be stuck.

It can be kind of nasally. Sometimes we'll see neurological symptoms. Mycotoxins can cause brain fog and fatigue and cognitive problems. And these are kids sometimes who aren't doing as well in school.

We kind of hear bad reports from teachers about behavior and other things. So when I hear about respiratory things and neurological things, and the skin stuff, again, that might be a sign that we need to dig into the mold piece a little bit deeper.

I think a lot of parents are really surprised by how much the environment still matters. Even after they've cleaned up the food, there's no bleach or Windex in their home.

But, you know, in your environmental medicine work, what are just like those, the most common invisible triggers that you see that are keeping kids in this state so inflamed?

Environmental Toxins and Mold Exposure

Yeah, one of the more toxic places a child can be is school. I mean, I find is that a lot of schools have mold issues and they never get taken care of.

Out here, when I'm out in California, a lotta the schools, because they've been running out of space, they put these modulars up. And, you know, modulars are designed to be temporary.

They're not really designed for weather. And of course, they leak like sieves when it rains here in California. So a lot of them tend to have mold. Think about all the cleaning chemicals that schools use, anywhere from Windex, 409, bleach, all sorts of toxic stuff.

Every day they reapply another thing. Schools can be really, really challenging, and as most parents have probably experienced, if you've got that sense as a child that's in that classroom, trying to get the teacher, the principal, school administrators to take appropriate measures to keep the school as clean as possible, it often doesn't go very far.

So, you know, my feeling is you do what you can to make your home a safe haven. I say get rid of all of the toxic chemicals, just use natural stuff, from personal care products to cleaning products, what to use in and around your yard, which you use on your pets.

You know that's pretty much the best you could do when you walk outside the front door you're kind of at the mercy of world. But it's all about load. And the more we reduce the load on the body, the easier it is for our bodies to handle when we do have that exposure.

I'm not the only one. We all use this idea of a bucket that when the bucket overflows is when you become symptomatic. Unfortunately, some people genetically are born with a very small bucket.

It doesn't take much to overflow. Other people have a large bucket and they can get exposed to a lot and never get symptoms. What we find for anybody with chronic illness of any type is that you probably drew the short straw on the jeans and you're one of those people who just doesn't get rid of stuff well, probably not a great detoxifier.

And therefore again, that little bit of exposure that accumulates at some point starts to overflow and becomes symptomatic. So to the best of our abilities that we can lower what's in the bucket that helps a lot.

Yeah, and there's so much you can do. And I mean, my goodness, when I like two of my kids had severe, severe eczema about six years ago and we were in the school system and I campaigned to have them adopt a different cleaning solution and i had to even supply it and all the things and send them with soap because it's such a big deal and you're spending so many hours at school and yeah.

I just have to say like, yes, this is like a big deal, but there's things that you can do. Just like in every avenue and every area of this, it's like there are always things you could do and it is never hopeless.

Well, you know, when I lived in Connecticut, we had an elementary school that had a leaky roof and by recollection it was going to be like $100,000 for them to repair the roof.

It was a bit project and they were bickering over time about spending the money. The mold was so bad, they had to raise the entire building and built a $42 million new school.

No way. That's how bad it got. So I know it can be a big environmental threat. And again, I wish schools, you know, put it in their budget for regular testing and cleaning, but it just never seems to kind of get to be aligned item and really of importance for most school systems.

And it's unfortunate because kids spend a good chunk of their life there before and after. And if there's something toxic in the environment, and again, I have patients who are teachers and I hear complaints from the teachers who

feel tired and they get headaches and feel foggy.

Then when they're home or they are on summer break, they feel perfectly fine. So we know this is a very real problem. Again, just another thing adding to the load.

I think the best we can do is control our home environment. Yeah, yeah. So I know you've treated a lot of probably thousands of Lyme patients, and I see a lots of overlap there.

And I wanted to ask you, what kind of parallels do you see between chronic Lymen kids and kids with persistent eczema? Yeah, again, I think, you know, it's this element of immune dysfunction and I it think it is a combination.

Again, genetics, early exposure makes a big difference, what mom was exposed to and did in utero, to what the baby is exposed right after birth. And again that's from whether they are breastfed or bottle fed, the kind of materials and cleaners that have been used on the babies.

We know that the skin barrier is sensitizing thing for eczema. If you do studies in rats and you want to find out what makes people allergic, you break the skin and introduce the allergen or the antigen through the scan.

So again, there's some pretty compelling evidence that that early skin exposure kind of sets the stage of what might happen a little bit later in life.

So again, as much as we can try and control a lot of those factors, I mean, that helps, but between Lyme and eczema, again there's this element of immune dysfunction.

And again it's just going back and trying to tease out for each kid what those triggers are and get those trigger under control. Yeah. Can you talk to us a little bit about, and not to scare anyone, but like when you have a condition like this, like eczema or Lyme or, you know, if you can get past the sleepless nights or whatever it is, or maybe it's not that bad and you treat it with a bit of steroids, can you like talk about what is happening on the inside if don't treat this systemic inflammation?

Well, I mean, systemic inflammation that doesn't get checked is just gonna continue to probably grow and worsen. And what you'll find as you get older, you'd get bigger, is you're gonna start to experience other inflammatory conditions.

Granted, it can take many years and maybe even decades for those things to occur, but if you look at almost literally, every chronic illness, there is some element of inflammation, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, cancer, and it goes on and on.

So when you don't get that inflammation under control early, inevitably we're going to see it pop up in different ways.

Immune Dysfunction, Lyme, and Inflammation

The body has kind of this strange wisdom that when there's one pathway that gets blocked, Again, I think steroids and eczema is a great example. I can't tell many kids I see, you know, it's kind of classic.

They start breaking out the creases of the elbows behind the knees, classic exema, they go to the dermatologist or their primary doctor. they start going on steroids, skin clears up nicely for a while, They come off the steroids starts to come back.

We talk about this more in homeopathic medicine, where when you suppress something like that, there's a reason it's being expressed through the skin. It's almost the way the body's trying to get rid of something.

So when we suppress that it drives it deeper and you might see it come out elsewhere. I've seen kids that started with eczema, were on a lot of steroids over a long period of time, and again, now they have asthma.

we took something was very superficial and fairly straightforward. Now we've driven a deeper body and now we have a deep level of illness, a more difficult illness to manage.

That's just one example of what can happen when you start to suppress what the body is naturally trying to get rid of. I've always been surprised over the years with dermatologists in particular.

There's some medical specialties that they have their routine, they go through without really the curiosity of the why. And never really, why does the skin break out like this?

And whether it's eczema or psoriasis or any number of skin conditions, they kind of know what to do about it, how to treat it medically, but not really with the understanding of the why.

And I think in our world, we're much more interested in the whys so that we can eventually stop it and fix the problem without necessarily suppressing it.

But it's just one of those things that can be incredibly challenging. And I mean, it is kind of rare that I have a kid that only has eczema, that does not have some other comorbid condition.

So again, depending on what else is expressing also gives us clues again what might be, you know, triggers. I know. It's so sad. Those are the solutions that was offered when I brought my kids to the pediatrician.

Like, here's two prescriptions for steroids and throw some bleach in their bath, and hope for the best. That's not going to work. I was wondering your thoughts on, you know, obviously there's this big immune dysregulation piece and why in some kids, like what scared me to death is exactly what you just talked about as a mom was like, oh my goodness, this can one day, if I don't get this in check, manifest as cancer, right?

This is a very big deal. Just as it is, it's a very big deal and not to mention if I just don't get this in check, you know, in short order. And there's lot of books that show like how like eczema is tied to all these different things and, even autism, right?

Like the Gaps Diet talks about like it puts autism and exema on the same spectrum. And I was wondering, like, why do you think in some kids it manifests as eczema and for some it's autism and, for, some, it, you know, a GI thing like a chronic IVS or something like that?

Like, Why do think that is? Yeah, I mean, it's a great question. I think when you look at our barriers to the outside world, that's our skin, its our gut, and even to a certain degree, our brain, or blood brain barrier.

When you see a lot of these chronic inflammatory conditions, again, somehow there's been a breakdown in those barriers. Now, why it comes out as skin in one kid and gut in another, mean that I don't know specifically why.

It probably has more to do again with some of those early life exposures. that if it was more chemical, maybe it leads to one thing. If it's more infection, it maybe leads another thing, I mean, we don't really know.

Maybe to get into a certain degree, there is a genetic disposition towards more skin stuff, more gut stuff and so forth. But at the end of the day, fundamentally, were treating them really all the same.

I'm mean we're still looking at those underlying inflammatory factors, so I don' know that it matters as much. about necessarily why one person's more disposed to one inflammatory condition over another if we kind of accept the prefect that all these inflammatory conditions have these sort of set of triggers and that we need to help identify them.

Because ultimately, that's the process I go through is whether we're doing laboratory testing or physical exam or whatever it is that is going to give us clues to what it that setting that inflammation off.

That's going help us figure out what we needed to do for that individual person to and help them heal and get well

again. Yeah, absolutely. I'm wondering when you identify, you know, IgG sensitivities and IgA and things like that, do you think that they have to avoid those triggers for their lifetime or do think they can repair enough to happen?

Absolutely not. No, what I find is that the overwhelming majority of triggers are transient and And if we can start desensitizing them, and again, I think this is where immunotherapy becomes incredibly important, you know, think about like food sensitivities, it's very easy to do whatever testing, your doctor does to help identify what those sensitities are.

It's great to say, okay, well, this bothers your child, don't eat it anymore. Oh, that sounds great on paper, but they're five, they've got a long life ahead of them.

And it kind of sucks to never be able to eat these foods again, and particularly if they're very healthy, nutritious foods. So in our practice, you know, not only do we help identify, again we desensitize, we helped build the immune tolerance back to the food so that they can eventually eat it again.

Now, the caveat to that is for kids that have true anaphylactic food allergies. We do not deal with that. That's a whole different immune mechanism, that's different problem, and I'm not a board certified allergist to do that, but for these delayed hypersensitivities, you know, we do a couple types of immunotherapy that has worked incredibly well.

And after a period of time, so yes, we do recommend to stay away from the problem foods for a while because now there's no competition with the immune system.

We can manipulate it a little bit faster because we see when we're treating things like mold, you can't avoid the weather. You can avoid environment. It can take potentially several years to get to a point where somebody doesn't need immunotherapy for mold anymore or dust or ragweed.

But food we can usually get through the whole process in seven to eight months. That's relatively fast. So to be able to get a child back to a point where not only does their skin clear up, but for them to start eating the foods and not have to worry about it, triggering some sort of inflammatory process.

I like the idea that we can really permanently change the immune system. And having done this for a long time, I rarely, rarely ever have someone come back with the same sensitivities again.

We're building not just immune tolerance, we're also building memory in the system So that again, you can have these exposures and just not have any kind of negative reaction.

So I like the idea that we can help people live in their world. I think we'd probably agree that our world isn't getting cleaner. It's getting more toxic all the time.

How do we help kids in particular, thrive in the world? Yeah, I agree. And we've lived it. Like my kids, you know, we eliminated some things to just rebuild their tolerance.

Now, it's not a thing. We healthy here because that's my job. But when they're out in the world, they do what they, do they don't have to advocate for themselves or do anything like that.

So it is helpful and hopeful to hear because I've heard some naturopathic doctors say that once it has flagged, that is it for life.

Food Sensitivities and Immunotherapy

Especially with these kids. It's just too long. No, and that has not been my experience at all. Again, I can't think off the top of my head of someone where we really weren't able to help them rebuild their immune tolerance.

I mean, again, you know, it's tough and I have kids that come in to eat three foods and we find out they're sensitive

to all three food and parents freak out, oh my gosh, what are they going to do?

And it is hard because there are some kids, particularly because I work with a lot of kids with autism who will self-restrict their feeding and they've got a lots of issues in and around food.

But it almost is like a drug addiction. I mean, they get addicted to these particular foods. And if these foods are provoking an inflammatory reaction, maybe it's their skin.

Maybe it is their brain. maybe its their gut or maybe all of the above. So if we continue down that line, you know, the inflammation is going to keep going.

We haven't really solved the problem. As hard as it can be with some kids to make dietary changes, I think. with the understanding that it is transient.

It is temporary. Again, these kids who eat three or four foods, we find after we kind of break the cycle, now they start becoming more open to wanting to try new foods and they'll accept something that, you know, mom's been trying to give them this food for several weeks and then they just keep turning their nose up.

Well, they will actually try it. They'll take it and now their diet expands, which just makes life, dinner time a whole lot easier for everybody. You know, it can be a little rough the first go around for the few weeks for folks, but you know once they kind of figure out what the child likes, what they eat, and what's safe, then it's not such a big deal.

But again, my experience when we go down that path, we usually see clinical improvement in the four to eight weeks. So it is not something we have to wait months and months to figure if we are on the right track.

When food is a contributing factor we know pretty quickly. Yeah, that's also really helpful to hear. And I just find, you know, just in personal experience and from hearing from so many of my clients, like once you start to take out the things that aren't food, the processed junk, and they're really just eating food.

Like, yeah, maybe that resistance will last like a day or two. But the kids are pretty quick. And then once you weed that stuff from their diet and from the environment, like, my goodness, their appetite comes back with such vigor and they are so much more adventurous, so, much, more open to trying different things and like genuinely craving.

You know, I heard from somebody yesterday said like I started putting, you know organ meats inside the meatballs and I just watched my son eat like eight of them.

He just could not get enough and it's like his body like craved in, really need it. And then is like there was like a fog lifted so that they can actually hear it and accept it, and help their body heal.

It's such a cool process. Yeah. Well, you know, I've spent a lot of time in Europe and I always find it fascinating to watch the way European kids eat versus the American kids eats.

You know it's so different from the time that their infants and what they're fed is their first foods. versus what happens here in America. So, particularly for patients I work with that are either thinking about getting pregnant or are pregnant, we have that time before the baby's born and we can talk about strategies of food introduction and how you wanna do it.

We used to say for many, many years, We thought it was a good idea for pregnant moms not to eat these high allergy foods and to avoid them early in solid food induction.

And we now learned that was terrible idea. It actually makes you more hypersensitive to the foods. Now we want pregnant moms eating everything. We want early introduction of all these foods, we wanted introduction to pets around kids because that helps with like pet allergy.

So yeah, being exposed to world early on seems to be a better strategy than trying to protect your child in theory

from all of these terrible things because your immune system learns what's out there and the sooner you can show that, it seems help modulate the immune systems in a more favorable way.

Yeah. So for the kids that are just like allergic to outside and everything, where do you go from there? Yeah, so we test kids. We find out if they're allergic, to dust, mold, pollen, chemicals, whatever it is that might be in the world.

And again, we start some type of immunotherapy to help desensitize them against that process. Again, it takes a little bit longer than dealing with food because, again, you can't control the outside environment.

But over time, we've got plenty of kids and adults that suffered from terrible allergies, hay fever, asthma, that once we get a toehold on their immune system and get across that threshold of building theirimmune tolerance, now they can be outside on a windy day and not feel like they're going to Their eyes are going to be terribly itchy or they're going have trouble breathing.

So the environmental stuff I see as being very straightforward, fairly easy to fix. It just takes time. But if people are patient with the process, again, immunotherapy can be incredibly powerful in rebuilding that immune tolerance.

I think the question gets asked a lot about, well, how come I'm allergic or my child's allergic to cats or dogs or pollen? And I don't think we've solved that mystery yet.

I don't think we truly understand what it is that sensitizes people in the first place. We've got a lot of studies out there, and again, early exposure we know, skin barrier is a big part, gut barrier's a bit part.

But I know there's anything really conclusive about what is for each person that makes you sensitive to that thing. I think about like peanut allergy in The United States, which is pretty rampant.

And yet, peanut allergies in Thailand, where peanut oil is used in everything, is non-existent. There's no kids there with peanut algae, pretty much. So again, is it just because there's so much exposure that it doesn't happen?

Maybe. So I think again this is where maybe the earlier we start exposing, you know, pregnant moms and children to the world, instead of just keeping them inside and fearful that they're going to get exposed to some bad thing, My advice is get them out there in the world, take them early on, let them go out to the park, get him out of the mall, and get around people and things.

And there's such a fear about, well, they're going to get sick. I'm like, that's possible, but it's also possible that they'll become more resilient by having that early exposure and may not have some of these chronic things that we see in a lot of kids these days.

Right. I agree. Can you explain like why rebuilding that immune tolerance is just might be more important than aggressively killing or removing things?

Well, in the case of like mold, I mean, can you really remove it? You might able to control it in your own home. But again, if you go out to a public building, a mall, church, school where You can't change the environment.

I mean, yes, avoidance is always kind of rule number one in allergy as a whole. If you can avoid the allergen, great. That's less thing to provoke you.

But in situations where that's not possible, again, food in most cases is, but even with food, sometimes things sneak in that you just didn't know were in the food.

But environmental factors, you have little control over. So I think the importance here is that, again, we wanna be able to help people live their life to their best ability and be out in the world.

And there's a lot of different ways to approach it. Again, I've personally found that immunotherapy seems to be the fastest way.

Rebuilding Immune Tolerance and Hope

Does rebuilding your gut health and gut membrane help? Absolutely. This rebuilding, your skin barrier help, absolutely. Then we do all of it, but I thing to get people to that end line faster, you know, immunotherapy building that immune tolerance so that you can tolerate the world again.

Again, even if we can never quite pinpoint what set off that sensitivity in the first place. I think about even like chemical sensitivity. People that can't go to the mall, the minute they smell perfume or formaldehyde or phenol, they get a headache and dizzy and lightheaded and all these terrible symptoms.

And like, well, again, it just kind of stinks to not be able to go out with your friends to a restaurant or do whatever, because you that that environment is going to make you sick.

Well, if there's a way that we can modulate your immune system and allow you to be that environment, I think that's huge win. So again, i've tried so many different things over the years, and again I want people to get well as quickly as possible.

But I mean, hands down, you know, immunotherapy has been the, the fastest path to getting people able to tolerate their world again. Do you introduce gut healing tactics before you introduced immunotherapy or can you do it side by side?

It's side-by-side. It is usually done simultaneously. Yeah. So while we're rebuilding their gut health, you know, whether it's they need probiotics or digestive enzymes or fish oil or whatever we identify to help control the gut, that can be done.

Simultaneously. That will help stop the influx potentially of things that are setting things off. Once your immune system is sensitized though, Often it stays sensitized until you do something about it.

And again, I've not really found, because I have parents ask me specifically like foods. Well, if I just do food avoidance and I don't do immunotherapy, will it still help?

Yeah, it'll still helped because you're not eating the food that bothers you. But what I found is that as soon as they started going back to eating food, particularly with any regularity, they start having problems again.

Then when we started doing immunotherapies, They were able to eat the foods and no problems. So yeah, avoidance by itself can be helpful, but again, I think if we're able to go a little bit deeper and manipulate the immune system in a different way, again people's get better faster.

So whether we are rebuilding the gut membrane, the skin membrane and the brain membrane all that work can done simultaneously. One's not mutually exclusive of the other.

Mm-hmm. Agreed. When you look at kids with these long-standing immune issues and they just haven't responded to conventional care, what gives you the most hope?

Well, the hope is that it is fixable. I mean, again, you know, I've seen a lot of kids that have been to the dermatologist, they've been their pediatrician, and the specialist.

They've tried a lotta things that didn't work. And Thomas Edison said, I found 10,000 ways not to make a light bulb. You found a lot of ways that don't work for your kid.

But that doesn't mean there isn't something that does work. And maybe it's something you haven't tried before. So when someone comes to my office, we go through their whole history of what have you tried, what worked, and what didn't.

I don' want to reinvent the wheel, but if there's nothing that hasn't been done, maybe we need to explore that.

Again, i've seen it over and over where We get into the weeds of their immune system and looking at these different triggers and yet nobody ever tested them for infection before.

Nobody did really any type of allergy testing beyond skin prick testing. nobody really bothered to look a little bit deeper for whatever reason. So if we can get our hands on that information and understand what's really going on with the child or the adult, then again it's a bit easier to have a path to healing.

So, you know, I just tell people don't ever give up hope. I mean, if you've been working with the provider and you just haven't got the results you want, we all think different.

We all practice different and sometimes it's just getting the hands of somebody else and seeing if he have a different experience. Yeah. Dr. Ingalls, thank you so much for being here and for this conversation.

And I really appreciate the depth and the clarity that you bring to this, especially for You know, all these families are living in this gray area of chronic symptoms and they're just trying to make sense of why their child isn't responding to all the efforts that they are putting in the way that the hope.

So I really appreciate everything that you shared today. Thank you again for your time and your work and for being so generous with your insights today, where can everyone find and follow you?

Fastplace is just my website. It's just darreninglesnd.com and all of our information is there. Amazing. All that will be in the show notes. Thank you, Dr.

Ingalls. Thanks, Andrew. As you're listening to this and starting to connect some of those deeper pieces, I just want to bring you back to something really important.

When your child's skin is constantly flared and constantly irritated and constant itching, it keeps their whole system in a reactive state. And they're not sleeping well and their nervous system is on edge.

and it becomes really hard to make progress anywhere else. So while you're working on the deeper root causes we talked about today, we also want to calm down their skin right now.

We want get more sleep tonight, and that's exactly why I created the Skin Comfort Trio. It's the three products that we used when my own kids were in that intense phase of eczema, when the itching felt non-stop and the flares just kept on cycling.

The oil, the cream, and the spray work together to soothe irritation and support the skin barrier and give your child's skin a break so it can actually start to heal.

It's not the full solution, but it's the first step that makes everything else possible. You can grab the Skin Comfort Trio in the show notes. And one more thing, if this episode helped you, it would mean so much to me.

If you left a review on the podcast as a thank you I will send you a 30% off coupon to use inside the eczema shop at eximakids.com. just leave a review and send us a quick message at support at eczemakids.com and we'll get that code to you.

All right friends, take care. I will talk to your next week. Thank you for helping with my exema. Love you! Thank You for listening today friend. i know healing your child's skin isn't easy, but you're doing it one smart step at a time.

If this episode gave you a little hope or a better night's sleep, Leave a quick review so more exhausted parents can find eczema kids and finally, rest easy too.

Follow, share, and let's help more kids heal. Take care.