Natural Doesn’t Mean Gentle: The “Soothing” Ingredients That Backfire on Eczema Skin Transcript

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Opening the eczema frustration

So tell me if this sounds familiar. Friends, you're on your knees and scrubbing the bathtub because you tried another oatmeal bath because that's what everyone told you to do.

Oats are soothing, oats are gentle, OATs are what you use for eczema. Aveeno says so, the doctor says, so everyone says. And that is just one thing you've tried, just 1. If you opened your bathroom drawer, You'd find olive oil and sunflower oil, and shea butter, tea tree oil.

and coconut oil And everything's natural and everything is supposed to help. and nothing is actually helping. And it's not because of any one product in particular.

It's because all of them and the confusion and overwhelm and cost of trying every single thing while nothing actually works. Mind it seven years ago then this is the episode for you friends today We're talking about why some of the most gentle sounding Ingredients can actually backfire on eczema skin and I'm bringing the research with me so you can stop guessing and start actually healing 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 eXima Kids. Here you'll find natural solutions that actually work so you can heal your children's exima without steroids, without the overwhelm, and finally see calm, healthy skin again.

Let's get into it. I know a lot of you listening have made the decision to move away from steroids or at least find something gentler or maybe you've been on the natural organic boat the whole time and either way it's a really good instinct.

I had it too. But there's something that all of us have had to learn the hard way and that's natural is a marketing term. It's not a safety standard. Poison ivy is natural, so is ragweed.

And I don't have to tell you, eczema skin isn't typical skin. The barrier is very, very broken. It is like a brick wall with the mortar missing. So it's fragile and things get in it.

Whatever you put on that skin, it doesn't just sit on top. it goes right through those gaps.

Why natural ingredients can still be risky

Even on healthy skin what you on the skin is absorbed and circulated. via your bloodstream throughout your entire body. And that's why the standard here has always been natural, organic, bioavailable.

No matter what you put on your skin, you want it to be something you wouldn't mind your body taking in, that you would eat it. Not that it would taste good, but that could eat and it'd be fine.

With eczema skin we had to go a step further and we have to make sure that we're not irritating a barrier that is already compromised or provoking an immune system that already overactive, even if the ingredients themselves are natural.

because once you put something on your child's broken skin, their immune system has to decide, is this a friend or foe? And when the skin is already inflamed, the immune is primed to pick fo.

So my hope by the end of this episode is you're going to know the main ways a natural ingredient can completely backfire and Why? So this starts to make more sense to you so that you can read those ingredient labels in the store and then save yourself the money by not putting it in a cart.

And you'll be able to look at what you already have with fresh eyes. So I want you to know this isn't just research that I read about. It's how I decide what goes into every single product that we make at XMA Kids.

The ingredient has to earn its place. That's where I started was in my own kitchen making these solutions for myself for my kids because not a single thing that I could find anywhere on the interwebs and also in the grocery store was both natural and helpful for eczema prone skin specifically and that's what we were dealing with that was keeping me up every single night.

all night. I had to find a solution. So I started making things on my own and I starting researching ingredient by ingredient and then combining them in different levels of combinations and different variables and things and consistencies to see what would actually work.

Point is, every ingredient had to very much earn its place, had be in there not just for tolerance, but for actual nutrition to fill the gap that their skin and their overall systems actually need.

So we'll talk about it more later. But I want you to understand first why these common recommended ingredients, the ones that you're finding on the store shelves, aren't helping, okay?

So one is food on broken skin. Let's start with the one that surprises most parents the most, and that's food. Putting food in the skin should be very, very tolerated, yes?

And many natural products are made with food, with oats and milk and wheat. and nut oils and food proteins. And the problem is food protein on broken skin can backfire in way most have never heard of.

If you were to think about this, if you are to thinking about meeting somebody new and if met them at the dinner table and you're sharing a meal and think, oh friend, and then you meet them climbing through a broken window at night, you think intruder, right?

And this same person is just a really different impression.

Food proteins on broken skin

That's what happens with food. When your child eats a food, And when your child eats a food, the gut learns that it's safe and that's the dinner table.

But when that same food protein comes in through broken skin, inflamed skin first, that is the broken window. The body can learn to treat that food as a total threat, which brings me right back to that bathtub because oats.

I want to be fair. Colloidal oatmeal does help some kids, but there was a study published in Allergy magazine and in 2007 and it was looking at children with eczema with the topic dermatitis and they found that sensation was way more common kids that have been using these creams especially when the skin was raw and open PS.

I mean, I don't recommend when you're on an eczema healing diet. I recommend taking out oats for a good 90 days because the body responds to oat proteins the same as it does gluten.

It responds with a glycemic spike and with inflammation. And I didn't know any of that when I was pouring oats into my kid's bath every night. And so I stopped.

And then another really common one is goat milk. Goat milk sounds lovely and nourishing and hydrating. It is if you don't have broken skin. Also, goat is dairy, friends.

Dairy is one of the most common food allergens in kids with eczema. That's why so many of you have already pulled the cow's milk out of your child's diet.

and then you reach for goat milk soap because it felt a lot gentler, and it is, but the proteins in goatmilk are so similar to the ones in cow milk that most people who react to one definitely react the other.

So if you've taken out dairy from their plates and put it right back on the skin through the broken window, it's not going to help the eczema problem.

And there's documented cases about this in medical journals, you know, where people are using goat milk based products and then they are overly sensitized to goat cheese, goat, milk, all the other things that they start eating on a regular basis and can even develop like an anaphylactic type of reaction to these foods, which can happen with anything, to be fair, not just goat milk, of course, but that is the reason that most of the products with goat-milk proteins in it isn't really going to help your child with eczema.

Another really common ingredient in these natural lotions and creams is wheat. The ingredient label won't just say wheat, though, and that's why it's really, really tricky.

face soap in Japan that was really popular that had hydrolyzed wheat in it, and so many people became overly sensitized to wheat and developed these brand new wheat allergies from using it.

And some reacted so badly, it just couldn't even be next bread, basically. That's all from soap, just being exposed every day in mild amounts. But a lot of Aveeno products, the ones that are marketed for dry and itchy skin, have hydrolyzed wheat protein right alongside the oat flour.

Plant allergens and essential oils

So it's a double whammy. And I want to be careful and totally fair. It's not the same ingredient that was in that Japanese soap that I just mentioned.

But wheat proteins on broken skin is exactly the kind of exposure that i want avoid for my own kids and for yours. And while we're looking at that label, those same washes have something called Quaternium-15, and it's a preservative that releases formaldehyde.

And it is also a well-known contact allergen, so a brand that's built its entire reputation on being gentle can still include more than one of the most common allergens.

That's why we just need to read label and not front of-the-bottle promises. Really what I want you to take away from this is keep food proteins off of inflamed skin, especially foods that your child hasn't eaten yet or is already reacting to.

Another ingredient that can very much backfire on eczema-prone skin is ragweed. especially those of you that have seasonal allergies. If your child sneezes every single fall and spring and throughout the summer, or you already know ragweed is a problem in the house, this is really, really important.

Chamomile and calendula are in daisy family. And then another plant that is in that family is ragweed. And you should probably be really familiar with ragweed if you've ever stepped foot into an allergist office, which I'm sure you have.

So many of our eczema friends react to rag weed and I know that was my first stop. I went to Whole Foods, you know, and bought the most natural sounding cream that I possibly could for my own kids and calendula is the number one marketed ingredient in for soothing effects.

And I'm not saying these ingredients are bad for everyone, but for eczema prone skin, they're really not doing you any favors. The way I think about it is a little bit like allergy shots, and that's called immunotherapy.

through immunotherapy, you take tiny controlled doses of whatever your child is reacting to to teach the body to tolerate it. But for someone that's already reacting, to ragweed, which is a really common thing, it's a textbook eczema allergen, slathering chamomile or calendula balm on broken skin can be like unintentional immunotherapy and at the worst possible time and in the worse possible place and the dose isn't measured and it's going through broken skin and its happening while the skin is inflamed and immune system is already on super high alert so instead of teaching tolerance it teaches the exact opposite in most cases.

And the tricky part is that reaction can actually look like an eczema flare and then what do we do as parents as well meaning mere mortal parents we just put more of that soothing balm on the cycle just keeps on going.

And I don't want you throwing out every plant in the daisy family. Plenty of kids use these herbs with no problem at all, and the form really matters.

Like a thick calendula balm or a chamomile soak is very different from a refined oil, but sunflower is in daisies, too. Refined sunflower oil contains almost none of the compounds that cause those reactions, of these lotions and balms and food, and it's one that we steer clear of here at eczema kits, but it is something to be aware of.

So the takeaway is that if your child has ragweed or seasonal allergies and their skin gets worse with a new herbal product, just check whether it was from the daisy family and that's the first place that I'd look.

Reason number three that some well-meaning, really natural products don't suit your child's eczema-prone skin that well is because some ingredients break down on the shelf very, very rapidly, like lavender.

Lavender is one. It's everywhere. Its in bath drops and lotions and body wash and sleep sprays and it's the smell of calm.

Barrier-damaging oils and lanolin

I love it. But think about what happens when you cut an apple and you like leave it on the counter. it turns brown. That's oxidation and air changes it and lavender does the same thing really rapidly.

You just can't see it Lavender oil in itself doesn't have any protection against oxidation. So once it's exposed to air, its main compounds turn into strong contact allergens.

That bottle of lavender oil that's been open in your cabinet for a year is more likely to cause a reaction than a fresh one. Lavendar isn't the only one, tea tree oil is a really big one citrus oils do the same thing.

Also, citrus oil increases your photosensitivity, your sun sensitivity. You wouldn't want to put those on topically. But really, you want keep your stuff with essential oils current, which is fair.

Good to know. And you'll want avoid lavender specifically on that eczema-prone skin. Same with tea tree. It's just too strong. Another reason that those natural products might be doing your child's skin more harm than good is that, those ingredients actually break down the skin barrier.

And this one stung a little when I learned about it, it was olive oil. I've used olive a lot. It came from my kitchen, It was pure, felt like the safest thing that I could possibly put on my kids.

it is so worthwhile to incorporate in your diet, the oleic acid when you eat it. is so, so helpful. But also, the oleic acid in olive oil is a little like paint thinner when you apply it topically.

Paint thinner doesn't pull the paint off the wall at once. It loosens it and softens until it breaks down, and oleac acid just does something similar to the fats that holds your skin barrier together.

And it loosens them and then the moisture escapes and on exoskeleton the barrier is very very thin and it's the very thing that we're trying to rebuild right and put back together.

So that's really really interesting and actually if you want to go deeper on oils in general and especially topical oils. I did an episode a little while ago, episode 242, it says, are you using oil all wrong?

And I break it all down there. Another ingredient that causes a lot of eczema prone kids some strife is lanolin. Lanolin comes from sheep's wool and it's in so many nipple balms and diaper creams and its marketed as pure and gentle and is.

But I have to share friends is the title that no one wants to win. In 2023, the American Contact Dermatitis Society named lanolin the allergen of the year.

If you think about how it's used, a nursing mom puts lanolin on herself and then the baby's cheeks and the face are right there and it touches the skin, feet after feet.

So you'd never put it on the Baby directly. Even if you're never putting it in on your baby directly, the babies is very exposed. This is exactly why lanoline was never an option when I made our baby bottom paste, which is brand new, guys.

I'm so excited.

How to audit products and patch test

What's in there is grass-fed tallow, castor oil, and zinc oxide, just ingredients chosen for skin that's already irritated and for the ones about your babies covered up and rubbed all day long.

My baby's diaper areas, I mean, they were beet red. It was intense. So I made something that helped that area of the skin specifically. And again, not everything that is said to be natural is bad.

Not by a long shot. I mean, that's the standard. That's what we want. Again, we wanted something that we could digest that bioavailable. It's not going to cause our liver any extra burden.

So natural, is where it's at. But you've got to know where these ingredients come from. and then how that reacts specifically to eczema prone skin. Like I used to use a lot of shea butter and I tried coconut oil and some things were fine for my kids.

I use every single ingredient under the sun and somethings were okay but the problem was I had no way of knowing which were because i use so many different things and I was constantly doing research and I kept buying new things because nothing was actually working.

And I keep trying and trying, and buying and, buying, trying. That is exactly where all of the overwhelm came from. So if you're up for it, here's what I'd really like for you to do this week.

Pull out every product that you use on your child, like the wash, lotion, the balm, bath stuff, even the diaper cream and line them all up. Then read all the labels and look for ingredients that we talked about today.

and watch for the names that hide the source. Hydrolyzed proteins, for example, or Avena sativa, which just is the Latin name for oat, make sure those are pulled out.

And if you pulled dairy from your child's diet, check for goat milk, milk protein or casein on the label too. If you try something new, patch test it first.

put a little on a small patch of unbroken skin before you use it on the flare, if there is any. I know for a moment there, my baby didn't have a single patch on un-broken-skin.

But hopefully you're not there. Hopefully there's at least a penny-sized piece of skin somewhere that is not flared up. and then keep a simple flare log.

If you start something new, write it down. That way, if the flare shows up out of nowhere, you can actually start to connect the dots because we've talked about this.

Sometimes the problem with sensitivities, with IgG sensitivity is those immunoglobulins stay in your system for a very long time, 42 days. The half-life is 21 days, it's a long, very, long-time.

So the reaction can show up, hours, days, you know, after the exposure. And that's just too long to actually pinpoint what exactly is happening. So don't panic.

Don't throw out everything. Plenty of kids tolerate some of the ingredients that I just listed just fine.

Recommended product line and next steps

The goal is knowing what to suspect if a flare is So if you're listening to this and you are where I was seven years ago, that mom in the bathroom overwhelmed and confused and spending a lot of money and doing their very best to heal their child's eczema and trying natural product after natural, product, after a natural project and nothing is working.

That is why I created this company. It did the research that I wish somebody had done for me. Every single ingredient in our products has a purpose. Each one was chosen for eczema prone skin and for your child's overall health.

And you shouldn't have to read because you have enough to do. You are working and you are managing the household and the husband and drop-offs and your work.

dermatology journals and research plant families and scrub oatmeal out of the tub to find out what works. And if you don't know where to start, start with the Skin Comfort Trio, friends.

It's the easiest first step for parents who are feeling exactly the way that I felt that you likely feel right now. If you want to explore the whole line, the dream spray, comfort spray the soothing cream, herbal oil, baby bottom paste, mineral sunscreen, prebiotic tea, these are all built with the same approach.

Everything that I have made, I just wish was available for my own kids, and it would have saved me years. And so many hours of sleep. So many. You can read about every ingredient and why it's in there in every product at eczemakids.com inside the eXima shop.

Start with The Skin Comfort Trio or The Healing Box. It has the SkinComfort trio in their along with three other really key products in there. And the goal of all these products is to make tonight more comfortable so you can start to actually heal this from the inside out.

If you need help with that, please sign up for an alignment call. I'm happy to spend 15 minutes with you going through your child's case, talking through what's going on with your family, with the child.

with your situation and see if we can help. If eczema is the reason that all of that isn't going well, I'd love to talk to you. So you can find that link in the show notes or it is also at eximakids.com.

Thanks so much, friends. Take care. I will talk with you 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.