Introduction to Gut Health Summit

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. We have Mark Singler here. He's an amazing naturopathic doctor who has authored many books and is a gut health expert, as actually just recently on your Gut Health Summit.

And it's really honor to have you here. So great to be with you. Well, thanks for for chatting today. So I wanted to start off by talking about your summit.

You know, for me personally, as a physician, one of the things that I have seen that's been such a, you know, crazy situation in the last few years is seeing how much gut health has deteriorated in our kids and how many issues we're seeing with kids in terms of constipation, diarrhea, bloating, pain.

And I know that your your gut health expert, you know, you just did a summit, as I mentioned, and I'm curious, what what are you seeing from the people that you've discussed?

What are some of the trends that you're seeing and what did you what did you learn from from doing a summit? That maybe you didn't expect to learn in the last few few months?

I think you're right. Of all the doctors I've talked to from around the country, treat people a lot of different ages. You know, pediatricians like you to doctors treating seniors, basically.

Yet it's a pattern everyone has seen really in the last, you know, 5 to 10 years, just increasing amount of digestive issues. Constipation, I'd say, is the most common one.

You know, for kids to adults for sure. Greatly increased, incidences of irritable bowel syndrome that's really picked up. And so everyone I talked to basically knows the underlying factors for it.

You know, it's the American diet, unhealthy diet, the effects of stress. Obviously, Covid seems to compound all this problem in terms of the effects of stress.

Rising Digestive Issues and Microbiome Imbalance

And so most doctors I talked to, they're very much aware of the literature and what they see with patients. There's imbalance in the microbiome. You know, this flora which is in the gut, which is very, you know, extensive actually in ranges between bacteria and viruses and fungi, which should act symbiotically, negate.

But it's great that it becomes a diet because of medications, because of stress, things like that. So it's causing havoc in the digestive system. But what I did in my summit series was not just talk about the gut problems, which is very common as it is, then how does that affect to the rest of the body?

So now it's indisputable that gut function affects brain function, kids and adults. It affects your immune system, whether it's a weak immune system or autoimmunity.

It affects your joints and muscles, your cardiovascular system, everything. So there's quite a connection between the gut and the rest of the body. Definitely.

And do you feel like that starts from from day one or even before? Because I personally do. I'm curious what you're seeing in the literature and what you're, you're finding in terms of gut health and how important it is to even think about these things during pregnancy and then in the newborn period.

Yeah. No, I, I have a book coming out or just coming out on the Holistic Guide to Gut Health. And I did look at the literature in terms of what you're saying.

What I found was a lot of researchers focused on issues that can come with the birth itself. I mean, in terms of they've done studies, whether you get a, you know, cesarean versus a vaginal delivery.

Of course, you're exposed to the flora, the good flora from the mother with the vaginal delivery. Obviously some, you know, some cases you can't do that.

But, I saw a lot of research on that showing the differences in the flora when they tracked infants and so forth. They had a vaginal delivery. I did see some literature, not a whole lot in terms of during the pregnancy, you know, the floor of the mother and the food she's eating and things of that nature.

I didn't see a whole lot of literature in that. I saw a little bit. To me, it makes intuitive sense that, you know, there's going to be some, some effect between, during the pregnancy and the digestive consumed by the mother or taken out of box and things like that.

And then we just know whether it be a child or an adult. When you look at, studies they've done on stool tests in America, they talk about the diversity of the gut flora.

And so the better diversity is generally thought the healthier your gut is. And because the average person in America, I think kids and adults tend to consume the same foods all the time.

There's not a lot of diversity in the diet and hence not a lot of diversity in the gut flora, which seems to, contribute to better health when you have better diversity.

I agree, and I'm curious, and I always ask people who are the individuals who are gut health experts, what are your thoughts on on probiotics? And I asked that question because I provide em prebiotics, because I think it's still, to me, somewhat controversial in terms of taking a supplement and how much that will help you.

I mean, certainly in in a newborn, you know, that there are probiotics that are aimed at increasing certain that flora in a newborn.

Gut Health From Birth and Early Life

And the research seems to be to be very, you know, kind of in two different directions that some research says it's like the panacea, it's super helpful.

You need this. We have the, you know, decreasing gut flora and then other research as well. You know, a lot of it gets killed when it goes in your stomach or it's not really making a huge, huge difference.

And I don't think we know the answer. And I would I think the answer is kind of it depends depends on the quality of of the supplement and the situation.

But I'm curious, what are your thoughts where, you know, for kids in terms of a newborn probiotic and then maybe as a toddler or older children, and do you feel that that they can be helpful in certain situations or what are your thoughts?

Yeah, we don't want to hear statements from people like you with what you just said. It tells me that you've looked at the research and understand what's going on.

And that's true. I think probiotics are a mixed bag. What I have done over the years is I've looked at the size of probiotics. And here's the one issue I think we run into most of the probiotics, not all, but most of the products on the market often use strains which do not have any human studies on which to me.

And I'm, you know, and with you that's a problem because, you know, if we're going to use things we want to, you know, have no idea how they work, their safety, their effectiveness.

I think probiotics in general are very safe. But, the issue is when you look at probiotics in the species that have been studied, there's a limited number that have human studies on them.

So my patients, I'm sure here's what I'm using probiotics with. You know, if it's kids, adults I want to use strains which actually have human studies on them.

So a lot of companies unfortunately use strains that don't have studies. So why would we want to do that unless people just aren't aware of this fact.

And so, to me it's very important use strains that have human studies on them. And we do have some, you know, with hemp, it's not like there are some.

So with infants, what I recommend is, let's say if the if the child just sort of just pauses for one second, or can you pause it once a year? Okay. Yeah.

So these probiotics both infants typically what I'll do if the mother has been on antibiotics. You know sometimes her group beta strep, you know, near the end of the pregnancy for whatever reason or on antibiotics, I might use an infant probiotic for a period of time, just as kind of a safety valve, if you will.

If the infant is having problems. Colic. One thing we do use is just a little bit of powdered infant probiotic, you know, with a reputable brand. Use that for a period of time.

But I think what I have found and you've probably found is probiotics generally don't colonize like, indefinitely, like they seem to help people as long as they take them.

And that's why we gotta focus on the diet, you know, getting that healthy diet, the plant foods, the cultured foods, you know, the yogurts and things like that to supply ongoing, as a way to build the flora and otherwise.

Probiotics. Yes. Do they help? Good ones. Yeah, I do find they help, but they don't seem to hold like the foods do. Yeah, I agree, and that's like basically exactly what I tell parents.

And just with supplements in general is that it's not meant to replace something. Right. It's it's meant to, you know, if you have a low vitamin D, you can you can boost it up.

Right?

Probiotics, Prebiotics, and Supplement Use

If you're missing some sort of bacteria in your gut that maybe you can help, get some of that in there to help you in the short term. But nothing is really going to help you in the long term except changing your lifestyle and and having a good diet.

If you give yourself a supplement forever, that's you're probably going to get minimizing returns over time. And you're not meant to get that anyways.

But at the end of the day, it's something that's synthetic. It's created in the lab. Yeah. I don't care how good the company is. I don't care how good the probiotic is.

It's not the same as getting it in real life through food. And I think that, you know, you could you could make differences. And I would say it's much better in general than taking a medication.

If you can. No medication is going to, help you more maybe in the short term in terms of treating something. But it's

not going to in general prevent anything or help you long term in terms of any sort of chronic condition.

But a supplement has minimal side effects in general. So to me, I think that that's a good place to start. If you're having issues like you mentioned, like colic or or issues such as that as opposed to taking a medication, but I wouldn't replace thinking about your lifestyle.

So I completely agree. You know, you know, there are as you know, there are some patients who of course, I you know, I do see some kids, more adults. You know, there are cases where you just get patients where, let's say they're prone to digestive issues, but they just are the right up front.

They just really aren't going to change their diet or lifestyle. So I can okay, well, supplements are the next best thing. You'll never be as good as improving your diet lifestyle.

But in those cases, you know, let's say someone's prone child's prone irritable bowel syndrome. Quite a reason the diet's not being changed. You know, then I may have them on supplements kind of indefinitely, if the next best thing, but with the understanding it shouldn't be a replacement for the diet changing.

Yeah, I agree, I mean, it's better than nothing for the for for most people. But the answer to the question is not to take a supplement. The answer to the question is to figure out what's the root cause, and then use supplements to get you to the point that that you want.

So I couldn't agree more. So I want to go back to something you mentioned before a little bit when you were talking about the gut health affecting the organ systems, and I was wondering if you could maybe elaborate on that a little bit more and, and just share with people your insights of what you learned and what you know about how important your gut health is to, you know, every system.

I think it's starting to become a little bit more mainstream. You hear about gut brain connection, but I still think most people don't really realize that a lot of their medical concerns, issues, problems that they're having in their life are actually related back to their gut health and what they're eating and what they're what they're doing.

So maybe you can elaborate on that a little bit and what you found. So interesting, we look at the power structure, which I have in depth the last couple of years.

There's basically this access thing I've found a direct access, a communication network from the gut to the major organ systems of the body. So let me start at the top.

So with the brain for example. So the brain, they found a by directional pathways. So in other words y'all knowing that you know your thought life and emotions and stuff can affect your gut.

And there's reasons for that. You know, we have neurotransmitter jitters and hormones and stuff which communicate. We have this vagus nerve goes from the brain, you know, through the wire, through the gut.

And so a lot of people understand that. But now they found the opposite. They have found, like the bacteria in the gut, has a messaging system which influences the brain.

So this is why now there's studies coming out with like things like anxiety, depression, focus and things like that. By improving, gut microbiome balance, you can actually improve, you know, these types of conditions.

Now, it's still kind of in the beginning stages of that. And yes, there's companies coming out with probiotics for anxiety and all that, which to me is it's really not we're not really exactly how to do it.

But they have shown this pathway. So if you're say your let's say your child has mood issues, your child has focus problems, memory problems, whatever.

Certainly in part consider working on balancing digestion, improving the microbiome of the gut for long term

success. That's certainly possible. You know, they have the gut, skin axis.

So let's say your child is prone to rashes, eczema, these types of things. So now we know there's a direct access between the gut in the skin so you can influence the skin health.

Inflammation of the skin in our skin has a microbiome as well. You can influence that between what's going on in the gut. Another one for kids would be the immune system.

You know, some kids getting sick a lot. I'm sure like you, oftentimes we find is related to their diets, maybe related to stress, sleep patterns, nutritional deficiencies.

But now seeing that 70% of the origin of your immune function comes from your gut. There's a direct influence. You know, how your immune system's working.

So you could improve immune resistance by improving digestive health and improve gut microbiome. And really, it goes on to, to pretty much any organ at this point.

Gut Connections to Brain, Skin, and Immunity

So I found an access to the bladder. They found an access to the bones, to the joints, to the muscles. So this is why, you know, this kind of inner core of the digestion essentially can influence all the systems of the body.

When you if a parent identifies this, they start to understand, okay, everything I'm feeding my kid makes a difference and everything I'm doing makes a difference.

What do you feel like are the things that families, you know, parents should should focus on? What are the major contributors to to what's going on with our gut health?

Because our gut health is crappy. I mean, there's no no way around it. Our lifestyles are crappy. We're basically living a life. I think at this point, if you live in a modern city that is going to unless you have your own little farm in your backyard or something, which is not realistic for people in the big city, that they're going to have gut health issues that are going to affect their body and they're going to create a chronic disease.

So what are the things that people should be should be focusing on that are causing them? I think it's as early as possible in life as you can. You know, they're introducing assault foods and so forth, is to try and get your kids accustomed to a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains.

You know, the problem you run into is if you don't do that early on, you know, you often have a a fight later on as a child gets older. Not used to it.

If they're used to it then it's a lot easier. So whatever creative ways you can get those fruits, vegetables, whole grains into their diet again, so you're not gluten sensitive, early on you're going to save a lot of problems down the road because that essentially is how you're going to, create good gut health.

And second, if you can get it on a, on a regular basis, some, some types of the cultured foods, this is a little bit trickier. Obvious. Obviously, one of the simplest ways is a type of yogurt, a low sugar, you know, a low sugar yogurt.

If they're if they're sense of the dairy, you know, there's coconut yogurts and other plant based yogurt you can get nowadays providing a direct source.

The good floor is other foods. You know, it's a little bit trickier. Again, if you start younger or if it's something your family would eat, sauerkraut and other types of foods, you know, that's always a nice bonus.

But they can start young and really focusing on getting at least 3 to 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, eating

some whole grains, and trying to avoid, like the white carbs.

You know, the refined breads, pastas, crackers as much as you can do that. You know, in America is a challenge because kids go to school. You know, a lot of their classmates just don't eat healthy and are sharing foods and talk about what they eat.

And so it's a challenge or just there's no doubt about it. But earlier you start these, you're going to be and, just being creative at home, being creative with different dressings and ways to get the fruits and vegetables in, I mean, that's that's what you have to do.

Yeah. And I tell parents too, it's at least from my opinion, it's not about being perfect. You know, if you if you control most of their diet and you feed them as healthy as possible most of the time, then if they do go to school and share a lunch every now and again, or eat a food you don't really approve of, it's probably not going to be the end of the world.

You know, for most kids. And you know, what was it? Kids are resilient. Adults are resilient. We're lucky. I mean, humans are very, resilient in terms of our gut function and liver and kidneys and what we can handle.

It's just when it's too much. And I think it's too much at this point. And that's why we're, we're we're running into these issues. And and speaking of too, too much.

So I'm curious about your thoughts on medication, specifically antibiotics. I get a lot of questions as a physician, especially in integrative mind, one with concerned parents who their child has something going on, like, let's say strep throat and they need to get an antibiotic, or they go to urgent care and they're kind of prescribed, you know, Mark Cicilline for ear pain, even though maybe they don't even need it.

And they're mindful of the fact that it, you know, it doesn't just kill good or bad bacteria, kills good bacteria too. And they're very stressed out about taking an antibiotic.

How that affects the gut health, how that affects long term health. And I definitely think personally that it's it's an issue because we're getting too many antibiotics.

I don't think it's a huge issue in the in the short term, if you need it one, one time. But I'm curious what what you found about taking antibiotic prescriptions and how that's affecting gut health.

So both kids and adults, we do use antibiotic prescriptions, but we don't use them very frequently. I mean, I'd say honestly and again, I have more of an older population based, but I'd say with our patients 90%, maybe up to 95% of the time when people have even acute things, you know, they got sinusitis, they got bronchitis, ear infections, things like that.

Actually, 90% of the time, 95% of the time, we're able to treat with natural agents very effectively.

Diet, Cultured Foods, and Daily Gut Support

But I think the key is, you know, your patients have you as a pediatrician. So you you do want to have a professional assessing whether this is a case where you should get antibiotics or.

No, certainly if you got strep throat, it means the standard of care. It's not worth the risk to avoid giving antibiotics. So in those cases, to me it's just a no brainer.

You know, if the child, let's say, has, and you're infection or sinusitis and they're getting good natural treatment, but they're just it's not resolving, you know, within a couple of days now that, you know, the child's basically tortured, so to speak.

I mean, you know, there's a time, a place to get the antibiotic. So our patients often we'll do the natural treatment

unless it's too acute or too severe to begin with.

Then we'll go right to the antibiotics. But we'll give them a natural treat and say, hey, if you're not improving in 24 to 48 hours or you're getting worse, then, you know, let's let's get you on the antibiotics.

Matter of fact, we'll do we always do several tedious treatment. So even if a patient needs an abort, we'll still use supplements and things to help them recover faster.

We'll also give them a probiotic at least two hours away from the antibiotic. Just to prevent, you know, get this viruses and so forth. So I think, you know, when you have a provider who's balanced, I mean, sometimes there are some natural health care providers out there.

They just almost never would recommend, you know, the patient antibiotic. And that's too extreme. One if and then you got a lot of your regular practitioners and pretty much any illness you come in with first time, you know, you get an antibiotic or drug treatment.

So it's good to have a provider in your area. And this can guide you on what's reasonable or not. Yeah. Agreed. And I want to linger on a point that you said, because I've seen very conflicting research about this.

And in terms of giving a probiotic around taking an antibiotic, and I've read some studies and some, you know, professionals that will say, okay, you should take your antibiotics and then take the probiotics after other professionals or studies say, you know, just don't take at the same time, you know, spread it apart a little bit.

So so it sounds like you, you feel like a couple of hours away from taking the antibiotic. It would be the best solution. But I'm curious if you could talk a little bit more about probiotics with antibiotics.

Yeah, that's what the literature, to be honest, it's not crystal clear. So we just on the side of caution, give least a couple couple hours working on it.

I mean, I have not seen any literature where, you know, the probiotic will negate the effects of the antibiotic. So that's a good thing, you know. So I think we've just er on the side of taking a different time.

They can't be more conservative even four hours away. You could do. So I don't think it's crystal clear. But we certainly see patients who develop it depends on how healthy the patient was to begin with.

You know, some patients develop yeast overgrowth. So as you might see on the children and so forth, to get in a box and the thrush and maybe more gas and bloating or starting get some yeast overgrowth.

And so we're trying to, you know, prevent this. Now if a patient, let's say a child is on antibiotics and starting to get it, you know, that coating off the tongue and getting gas and bloating, then certainly we'll put them on some antifungals.

We will use, you know, somatic fungal herbs or to be honest, we'll use, liquid Neistat. I mean, the beauty of liquid nystatin, as you know, as a medication is that, you know, it's it's little to none of it's absorbed into the bloodstream.

So you're not putting, you know, child risk for having liver, kidney problems, heart problems, you know, damaging the internal organs. So always tell patients, hey, this is one medication I'm not concerned about in terms of getting yeast down because you're really absorbing none of into your bloodstream.

And and so it's it's pretty good in that way. Yeah. No it definitely great. And I would say that's exactly what I tell parents too. I think that the risk is pretty minimal.

I mean, probably no risk if you're taking antibiotics. The risk would be that it doesn't work or probiotics if you if you're taking that with antibiotics.

But I think that there's enough research out there that shows that maybe it helps a little bit that I don't see the the downside of doing it. If somebody somebody wants to do it alongside it makes common.

It's common sense to me that it might help a little bit. If you're taking some things away, you're putting some things back in that are good, and then maybe that minimizes whatever, whatever's going on a little bit.

But again, going back to, you know, sometimes you need it. Right. And I think that is one of the most frustrating things with, with medicine right now in integrative medicine is it's not two teams, right.

It's not like you should be all in integrative medicine or all in modern medicine. It's sometimes you need a medication, sometimes you have a pneumonia or or a strep throat or whatever an antibiotic is going to save your life.

And then the rest of the time you don't need it. Or maybe you don't need unless things get worse. And that's where communication comes in, which is, you know, a terrible part of modern medicine these days is like, you can't really get Ahold of anybody.

It takes you a week and a half to get in to see your doctor, and then then, you know, if you don't have that kind of communication, that's when you can run into a risk of getting seriously ill versus, oh, my kid's got a cough, but they're fine.

Antibiotics, Probiotics, and Balanced Treatment

You don't necessarily need an antibiotic at that point. You only need it if it gets worse. But if you're not going to be able to get in for another two weeks, well then, you know, they may give you a medication.

And so that's really the frustrating part to me because then, you know, you do run into giving kids too many antibiotics and problems. That's true. That's why it's always important for everyone to have, you know, providers.

So if you're about to have a child, you have a young infant. You've got to get organized and have, you know, your health care provider is kind of lined up, have a plan.

You know, like you said, you're you're not kind of left out in the cold, so to speak. When things occur, you need to be organized beforehand. Yeah. I think I was going to say is, you know, the nice thing is when you limit the amount of drugs that a child gets, you know, good natural treatments and stuff in a, you know, in a balanced way.

Then when you do use the medications, you're like, wow, they look they work like magic. You know what I mean? I mean, it's pretty impressive. I remember my my son when he was quite a bit younger, you know, he's an adult now.

But I remember one time on a sports team, all these kids had coughs and stuff and everyone was sick. And, you know, I think about, all right, I think we're about week two and a half and my son is still, you know, playing sports and coughing up a lung and hacking.

And so I'm like, So I did a test for a whopping cough. And sure enough, you know, he was positive, which I'm sure other kids in his team were too, who started, I don't know.

But anyways, so I put them on, actually I, I did with them. I put them on antibiotics and I actually gave them intravenous vitamin C, which isn't commonly done with kids, but we're trained in IB CRP.

But when they get me out of boxes, just like within like two days, it was like a dramatic turnaround. All right. So you can see the power in these things and, they can help.

And and I think especially again, when kids are, aren't on a lot of drugs, throughout their life, when you do take them just, like, very impressive. Yeah.

And again, that's common sense, I would say, because you think about any medication and anything, almost everything works better when you first take it.

And then it works less and less as, as you're taking it for longer. So realistically, if you're not taking a medicine and then your body's not used to it, it's going to work more powerfully than than if you're taking, you know, the medicine all the time.

Like, for example, like a Tylenol, right? If you're taking Tylenol every day for a long time, then the effects wear off. But if you never take it, but then your kid has a really bad fever or is really, you know, miserable.

And they need it that one day for whatever's going on, then it's probably going to work a lot better for them, in that specific situation. And sometimes you need a medicine, and if you take it once, it's pretty unlikely to cause you any long term side effects as opposed to taking something every single day.

What are you right, I get I've had that question many times over 20 years of practice. You know, where parents are calling on their child or they're bringing in the child.

Has it say, you know, a really bad headache. They've had a, you know, more than a mild fever and it's causing head pain and discomfort. And they're a little bit worried about giving, you know, say some Tylenol.

And I'm just like, look, I mean statistically the chances your child's going to hurt business Tylenol short term. You know, it's extremely rare. Plus you know, your your child's suffering.

You know, maybe try some natural things. You're still you know, and they're suffering great. We don't want your child to suffer and think about this way.

They're they're under pain or discomfort. They're not sleeping well. That in itself is running their immune system down can be harder to recover. So I try and leave their fears with the short term use.

You know, it's good on a couple of ways you're going to alleviate their suffering. Number one. And number two, you know they're not going to run down and get sicker.

And to finish up with maybe going back to your summit again and kind of going to the big action steps that are your takeaways, you know, whether it's from the summit or just from your general practice of the main things that parents should be thinking about when it comes to gut health and the main things that they could be doing.

Simple steps, things that people could do at home for their kids today where you would say, you know, if I was to focus on these three things or I want to do these three things that don't really cost you a lot of money and anybody could do it, you know, what would be some of those tips that you would want to leave parents for action steps today of what they could do, you know, for the next good question.

Well, I think first of all, I would come up with a plan. You can get some books like yours and other books which give you creativity, creative ideas, how to get in more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Practical Takeaways and Where to Find Mark Singler

I mean, I'd say that's got to be the core of it, and you're going to have to play around with it and see what you can do with your kid and do it on a regular basis.

Remember to try and get some type of, cultured foods in the diet. I mean, easiest for kids often is yogurt. So get unsweetened yogurt, put some, you know, organic berries in there.

To sweeten it up a bit. I mean, that would be number two. And then number three, I would say just, you know, work with an integrative doctor. If they can help natural health care practitioners to limit the number of antibiotics and medications you need, if you need them, you need them.

But to limit that so you're not creating, disharmony in the digestive tract. And then I should also mention one, especially in recent years, don't underestimate the effects of stress on your child and their digestion and your health in general.

So if your child's not getting regular exercise, if they're under a lot of emotional stress, different areas of life, make sure you're dealing with it when they're younger because it'll prevent problems.

You know, as you get older. And of course, up the child care. Now. And I would add to that, read your book right now. Okay. You're going to. So can you tell people I guess we'll finish up may tell people where to find you and go back.

And you mentioned your book really quickly at the beginning, but maybe you could tell people a little bit more because I think it's really relevant. And coming.

Out, thank you for all my book is, The Holistic Guide to Gut Health. Okay. So it's available on Amazon bookstores or you can read about it. I have a website called Dot soothe.

So welcome to.com. People can read more about it now specials on and stuff like that. So yeah. So that's that's a book all dedicated towards digestive health, from, you know, infants up to, seniors.

What about social media? Where, where they find you if they want to. Yeah. Social media Facebook. Mark Spangler Instagram. Mark Strangler there as well.

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for for being here. Thank you for everything you do for for kids and adults and pushing the gut health, you know, paradigm forward and helping people.

And in an area that I think needs a lot more a lot more assistance. Hey. Thank you.