Introduction and sponsor message

You're listening to the Get to the Root podcast with Hope for Healing. Now we know eczema can feel overwhelming for the kids and the parents who love them.

So today, Dr. Paula Krubstats will share her personal story and clinical approach from gut and glutathione to food and environment. We will give you practical steps that you can start tonight.

If you want solutions and not just creams, you'll want to hear this. This podcast is for education and encouragement. Please consult your health provider for personalized medical advice.

Now a note from Dr. K about our sponsor. You know, at Hope for Healing, we believe eczema healing starts from the inside out. That's why we're so excited to share that we've partnered with Lagrange to create something truly special, the eczema panel part one.

It's the foundation. Just like a house needs a solid foundation, your skin needs the right base for healing. This panel looks at your genetics and how your body handles things like detoxification, inflammation, gut balance, and vitamin D.

These are core systems that can influence eczema from within. It's the first step in a three-part series designed to uncover your body's unique needs and guide real lasting healing, not just symptom relief.

You can learn more or order your panel today at the link in our show notes. and start building your foundation for healthier skin and a calmer body. Dr.

K, thank you so much for joining us. Just right off the bat, we know that eczema can be such an emotional journey for parents. And as a mom yourself, what were some of your first experiences with eczema, either personally or professionally?

And how did that shift your perspective throughout the years? Well, personally, my third daughter had severe eczema at age two, and then she developed molluscum contagiosum in it.

Dr. Ku2019s eczema story and steroid frustrations

So if you don't know what those are, they're little raised flesh-colored lesions, but then they all flared and were red all at the same time. So she had over 200 lesions behind her knees.

and in the crevices of our arms where the elbows are at. And all I had in my arsenal was oral antibiotics for staph or strep and steroid creams. So it's terrible when your child is itching all the time and a lot of gut things go hand in hand with that too.

Why do you think so many parents are told that their child will either grow out of it, but still find themselves years later just constantly stuck in these flare wipes and just, like you said, being handed steroid creams?

Well, I think it's because allopathic or Western medicine, everything we've been taught, you just put the fire out, but you don't look for why the fire is there to begin with.

And so it's a remedy, a band-aid remedy, and that's all pediatricians are taught at this point in time. That's so true. And okay, so because that's what they're taught, that's also how parents are being educated, right?

So they're being told, yeah, just get the serum cream. It's not going to make that big of a deal. Just keep doing it.

And you can correct me if I'm wrong, but what I've heard a lot of parents say, all of a sudden it works and then it doesn't.

Like the serum cream just stops working. So can you talk a little bit about what that means? Right. Well, let's take a deep dive into what eczema is to begin with.

So eczema is called a biofilm, meaning that there are bacteria or yeast or a combination of that and other organisms living within the skin. So the first thing you need to do is test that biofilm with a special swab.

Then What's so unique about the skin is that there's something in the body called glutathione that concentrates itself in the skin. We make that, but by definition, people with eczema don't make enough of it.

And so glutathione is called the body's master anti-inflammatory. So when we think about inflammation, that's something that's hot, red, swollen, and painful.

And when you look at a child's skin that has eczema, it's red. They may have staph or strep, which are little purulent lesions. It may have a honeycomb or yellow appearance and then it spreads and it's itchy and they scratch and they may spread that stapper strep to the rest of the body.

So the benefit of using a steroid cream is it acts right where the issue is but the problem is It's absorbed systemically. And steroids thin the skin out.

And it eventually affects our brain in the hypothalamus and the pituitary. But the pituitary gland is where we make something that tells our adrenal gland what to do.

So you're messing up the hormone system by topical steroids. So your original question, it works for a while, but then it stops. Does it stop communicating?

Yes, or you suppress the body's ability to mount a response. So your brain tells your little old adrenal gland, which is on the back of the kidneys, don't work, don't work, and you can't mount a response.

So steroids work for a while and then they don't. Well, and then, sadly, I think sometimes these parents are then just told, well, let's just try a different steroid.

Let's just move it. But what I hear you saying, and as hard as this can be to sit with, is that eczema is actually your body communicating something is off.

Biofilm, glutathione, and why steroids stop working

And though it is a very painful communication, that's what your body is trying to say, whether it's your child's body, your body, your bio's saying, something is off and I need to be fixed.

And I want to be fixed and feel better. Correct. And, you know, when it's red and hot and swollen, you're thinking infection. but what's bubbling underneath?

And then what do you need in order for your body to stop doing that? Well, and I really like that you started to talk about all the things that are really at play here.

Because I think sometimes people can brush eczema off as just being really dry skin. and or just really itchy and ignoring it. So can you talk a little bit about what like minor mild eczema is like kind of how it starts out first before it becomes this full-blown?

Right, so since Our skin is our first barrier, places where you sweat a lot and there's a lot of friction. So at the bend where the elbow is, that tends to be a place that gets affected.

Also the most common places at the earlobes, like the skin cracks and fissures right around the earlobes. and then behind the knees. Now, if the skin becomes red, we have staph and strep and yeast and other things on our skin, and if you scratch, then those organisms can climb in and get inside, and you may develop a secondary infection.

Now, the integrity of our skin is really influenced too by what's inside of you. So, you need to have adequate, what we call omega-3 fatty acids, you know, healthy fats in the diet.

So let's talk about that. We hear a lot about the gut and how the gut can affect skin conditions and I know you also have like the gut-brain barrier and we hear so many different kind of combinations.

Can you talk a little bit about where eczema comes in with all of these words and catchphrases we hear nowadays. So the skin is a reflection of the gut.

And I mentioned at the very beginning, we have this master anti-inflammatory called glutathione. Well, that lines the gut. And if you lack glutathione in the skin and in the gut, because let's think about where we battle infections.

So we battle infections on our skin. We battle infections, our respiratory tract, like ear infections, sinus infections, infections in our mouth, but our mouth is the beginning of our gut, and also the bladder wall.

So that's where glutathione concentrates itself. So when a child or an adult has maybe mild dry skin that just kind of comes and goes and they just use a little topical steroid off and on here and there, Unless maybe they get stressed and it flares or it gets infected.

And then there's horrible that's awful all the time. It's still what I said at Biofilm, and you need to identify those organisms. But when you think about the gut and skin connection, you not only use topical glutathione, but you use oral glutathione.

To be able to, because what you're saying is that if the stomach isn't working, functioning properly, then you also need to address it, to not think of it just as a topical issue, that it is an internal issue.

Right. It's always an internal issue. It's always an internal issue. And certain foods drive eczema. Okay, so I think we have to go there, right?

Skin-gut connection and food triggers

You can't not as hard as it is, is that you have to start tapping into. So, and I think that could be a very easy place to start. What kind of foods have you seen over your many years being a pediatrician?

Have you seen that dry eczema? Well, I'm thinking, too, to my personal experience, this daughter that had the horrible eczema with the molluscum, and I was getting ready to take her to the dermatologist to have all those little molluscums burned off with what's called beetle juice.

They flared and they went away on their own. But she was also my daughter that after she had ice cream, she'd sit on the toilet in pain and have diarrhea.

And it turned out that dairy is the culprit at the root of a lot of eczema. And, you know, we've been fooled into thinking that dairy is good for us, but let's just think about this.

How many times when you drive past a field of cows and bulls, do you see an adult bull drinking cow milk from a mama cow? You never do. We're the only species in the world that drinks another species' milk that has four compartments.

And that's exactly when we talked about this. That was a huge thing for me when you were like talking about our stomachs are built a very different way.

Can you talk a little bit about how cow stomachs are very much not built like this? Yeah. So if you've heard the word rumination or chew your cud, well, this sounds kind of gross, but when a cow eats grass, it has four stomach compartments.

and it chews it up, it goes down into the next stomach compartment, and it has enzymes, then the next one, then the next one. Well, somewhere along the way, as gross as it sounds, it regurgitates part of that, and it chews it over again.

A human being has one stomach, and then you have the entire GI tract. And for an adult, that's about the surface area of a tennis court. So, for a little one, maybe a bad mint in court.

So, you know, if it's inflamed with a lack of that glutathione, then the whole gut's inflamed. So, a lot of times, eczema and tummy problems go hand in hand.

I remember, we've gone through this whole thing a lot. We talk a lot about how we're just not, like, we're not fans of dairy, though we are fans of the way it tastes and we totally understand that.

We are not fans of what it does to the digestive system. And there, you are going to hear it a lot on the podcast of the different ways that specifically that this affects you.

But whenever I remember sitting in the conference room and you just talking through like, well, I mean, they do have this stomach that can process. And I'm like, Oh my gosh, like we are not built that way and they still don't drink that milk.

So how much more do we have to be delicate with our bodies and be taking care of our bodies? And also we're not having this conversation for no reason.

We're having this conversation because you or your child is dealing with severe eczema or any eczema. But I really love how you talked about something and I want to go back to it because you said, that whether they are experiencing this eczema because they went outside or because they're experiencing frustration or anger, can you talk a little bit about how their emotional state can affect eczema?

Yes. You know, that's so important because there's something called the gut-brain connection. So when we think about our intestinal tract, There's only one nerve that influences the entire GI tract, and that's called the vagus nerve.

So when someone is stressed, many people will tell us that their eczema flares when there's a lot of emotional trauma. or even a physical illness, and that's because our nervous system becomes dysregulated.

And this is why it's so important when you think about eczema, you have to think about the whole person's body. So we think about learning how to look at what's gone on leading up to the skin flare.

and what's happening in someone's life. Is there marital discord? Is mom a single mom just scraping by? Is there trauma, bullying going on at home? So ways to, one of the easiest ways and the simplest ways to kind of get a kiddo calmed down is teach them to blow bubbles.

You smell flowers and you blow bubbles. And that and belly breathing to kind of use your diaphragm to calm the gut. And that just sends some signals to just calm down and be still because we're not just our skin and we're not just our gut.

And so that's uber important. I love that because I remember when that conversation or when that question came up in a Q&A session that we had where it was like, I notice that my child's eczema will come back or get worse when he's frustrated or angry or experiencing.

I was like, oh, that's so interesting. And I personally struggle with eczema. And so I remember going, oh, I noticed

that. And you were so unfazed by that.

You were like, nope, that exactly makes sense that our body is so interconnected and interwoven. So before we go into a little bit more, are there any other foods that you would have someone stay away from?

Well, yes. So basically, if you can't read the words of the ingredients of something, don't put it in your body. So I will say, I think the most important thing to remove if you or your child struggle with eczema is dairy completely.

Dairy elimination and glutenu2019s impact

And there's all kinds of great options otherwise, but I think cheese is such a temptation because, my gosh, cheese tastes good, but the effects on the GI tract and the effects on the skin and the respiratory tract getting congested, and you may develop diarrhea or constipation in conjunction with that.

So that would be number one, removing dairy. But I love that you started them on a thing. Before you go into number two, you said something that I think was really important.

So right now, it could just be eczema. And I say just in the sense of like, there's only one thing, but eczema in it of itself is very hard to deal with.

But what you really started tracking with is that it's eczema, then it's constipation, then we have respiratory tract, and then we have… Is our body almost out of place of saying, hey, I'm starting with one thing to let you know something's going wrong, but as we continue to put these toxins and chemicals or dairy in our body that it starts to almost continually say something is wrong until you treat it.

Have you noticed that? Absolutely. In fact, eczema rarely shows up alone. And in our practice, a lot of times we see little kids with severe eczema. They also may have diarrhea or constipation or it alternates and just severe anxiety or phobias.

You know, before Lauren, you asked me about going outside and sweating. When we consider the emotions and a lot of people break out in cool and they also break out in heat.

And so it's this whole interplay of all these body systems that are just hanging on by a thread and you alluded to the domino effect that the skin is saying something is not right, something's not right, but you can definitely hang your hat on this that in the gut when your eczema breaks out there's got to be something going on in the gut at the same time.

I have never found in the 10 years of of having hope for healing, that when we've looked at both, they're not in isolation. There's always something going on with the gut.

So you treat a person looking at everything. So question then, I know we've talked about this a lot, and if you have other foods, like I said, we'll get back to it, but specifically with dairy, about how long do you recommend someone to go without dairy before they actually see any type of change.

Well, to give it a really, really good duration, six weeks. Okay. Complete removal for six weeks, but many times within two to three, you will see an improvement.

Like a lot of times with the kids in our practice that are autistic that are still consuming dairy and a lot of gluten and you know, high preservative and sugar things, you take the dairy away and typically within three weeks the eye contact improves.

And so two to three weeks is the minimum, but give it a full six weeks. Why? The immune system remembers things. So a lot of times when you do what's called an elimination diet, you take it out and then for six full weeks, the immune system kind of settles down a little bit.

But then if you give yourself a bunch of dairy full force again, it's like, wow, your symptoms blow up. You get diarrhea. You're congested within a few minutes.

Your skin breaks out. But I don't recommend putting it back in if you're struggling with eczema. Right, absolutely. Okay, so I really love that because I think that's kind of like the, I think some people are like, wow, I didn't do dairy for a day or two or even a week and they expect the body.

But your body almost has to like calm down and have a breather and like readjust to like its new homeostasis. And I think that's really important. Okay, so back to you.

Did you have one other food you'd like to add? If they've already gone dairy free, is there another possibility? Okay, now don't hate me, people. But I'm here to tell the truth.

And integrity is one of our core values here is that gluten, whether or not you have a genetic predisposition to develop celiac disease or not, every time any person consumes gluten, these little tight gap junctions in the gut.

It's the cells in the gut are supposed to stay together and they have little enzymes in them. That's what my fingertips are. But every time you consume gluten or anything that contains gliadin, which is in barley, rye, oats, wheat, spelt, corn, millet, dairy, It tells those cells to open up so you have gut permeability for three to four hours every time you consume gluten.

So that means Everything you've consumed has the ability to present itself to the immune system and confuse it. And your immune system doesn't know if it's a friend or an enemy and start to make antibodies.

So you get these food sensitivities, food intolerances, maybe allergies. And that's why dairy and gluten really should be removed if you've got eczema.

Wow, I really love that you explained this because this actually leads to There's two ways to go with this and I just love everything you're saying I would go with because you're the way that you approach this is a little bit different and I've had the pleasure of like washing this through different patients that you've used is that I think Everything you're saying sometimes people's first reaction is to go.

Okay Well, then can I get allergy testing to ensure that that is and and You're like, you are very quickly to go, you can, but let's not waste your money.

And can you really talk about why allergy testing, based on everything you said, is not necessarily the best approach? So since we know that you may not have an allergy to gluten, but since we know gliadin, which is in gluten, automatically opens up the gut, then you just need to stay away from it because it's causing permeability.

Now, there's also two parts of our immune system. There's what we're born with that's called the innate immune system. We get what we get and we don't throw a fit.

It doesn't change. It's hardwired into us. But if your immune system isn't acting correctly, there's another part of the immune system called the adaptive immune system.

That's what vaccinations are meant to stimulate. Or when you're exposed to certain foods and say you do like blood testing and it does show you're quote unquote allergic to it.

Well, if they're low level, those can fade. But it's a waste. So we know that dairy or casein, which is in it, is inflammatory and gluten.

Testing, opioid receptors, and withdrawal

Here's another big reason why that has nothing to do with allergies. Gliadin and casein make short-chain opioids. They make you feel good. And let's face it, the food industry knows it.

So what do they put the dairy and the gluten in? Fat and sugar. So you think about a donut that's glazed, got a little fat, got a little sugar, it keeps you coming back.

You feel good for a while, then you crash and burn. Then dairy, think about your ice creams like Bluebell. You know, you got sugar, you got fat, and you got dairy.

Keeps you coming back, you feel high and really good for a little while, then crash and burn. So those short-chain opioids bind to opioid receptors in your body and make you feel good for a little while.

And it tricks your body and then you want more of it. And the food industry knows that. Yeah, because when you said the opioid receptors, is that why that reaction is so dramatic whenever we remove it?

And I don't, I mean, like I've removed gluten and dairy and it is, it's, I like, I don't even have other than like the addiction, like the headaches, the nausea, the trying to figure that out.

But you're saying it's a, if it's a chain to opioid receptors, is that why we have such a rough reaction? Yes. Yes. Because if you're literally in withdrawal.

And so there's this awesome documentary called The Magic Pill. I think it's on Amazon Prime now. It used to be on Netflix. But it was like watching these children go through, various children and adults and families go through five days of stopping processed food, gluten and dairy.

And then they just went to real food. They went to fruits and vegetables and clean poultry and grass-fed beef and meat and fish and It was completely different and it was literally Withdrawal like horrible like slamming doors major temper tantrums then they showed five days later and this calmness that was pervasive and You know people go well my kids just won't do it or they won't do that and if they're If they're neurotypical, you're not going to starve.

They're not going to starve to death. And also, don't say anything about it. You just stop buying it. And you create this sanctuary, and you have alternatives, like nada mou, coconut milk ice cream.

So it's something, but it's not the same thing. The other thing that's really important is that when you're putting dairy and gluten into your body, it causes pain because it also causes this opening of the blood-gut barrier, the stimulation of the immune system.

You know, I used to weigh almost 300 pounds and I was in chronic pain and when I removed gluten, that was one thing. And I went six weeks without having dairy and my family got me some quinoa, mac and cheese.

I ate it and within 15 minutes my nose was full of snot. I started sneezing and I was so congested and I went, oh my gosh, I can't have dairy. And this was before I knew what I know now.

So, but I never knew that and I was a kid who had chronic abdominal pain, you know, and chronic pain. So, but when we think about pain, also think about mental and emotional pain and addiction.

You keep coming back. And then the other place that casein and gluten, where they cross the blood-brain barrier, they bind to folate receptors. And folate receptors help us absorb vitamin B9 to make more dopamine, which helps us with short-term memory, focused concentration, organizational skills.

So many times with a kid with severe eczema, they may have a lot of trouble paying attention too. So it's all interconnected. And like honestly over the next several episodes, we're going to break down a lot of this.

So this will be a lot of what we constantly refer back to. Please listen to episode one about eczema and where we really break down the gluten and the dairy and why this all comes into play.

But something you said was really struck. And if you know anything about hope for healing, you cannot listen to what we do without at least going into how mom, dad, aunt, and uncle all play a role into this.

And so are there genetic components that play into this eczema thing? Yes, absolutely. I mentioned this earlier, but glutathione is three amino acids long, and our body makes it.

But if you don't make enough of it, which concentrates itself in the gut and the skin, by definition, you develop eczema. There's one particular little genetic snip called GSTP1, glutathione S-transferase pi gene.

It concentrates itself, as stated earlier, in the skin, the gut, the respiratory tract, the sinuses, and the bladder wall. Those are the major places where we wage a war against infections.

Genetics, glutathione support, and environment

So by taking oral glutathione or by putting glutathione on your skin, Now glutathione might have a little sting to it, so typically we ask that parents coat the skin.

You can do something as simple as extra virgin olive oil or organic coconut oil that's solid at room temperature to fill the cracks, and then put a little pea-sized dot of that glutathione cream onto the skin.

Do little test areas to just see And you can do that multiple times a day. We can unpack that in future episodes, even more details. But that's a really good place to start.

Start with a lifestyle. Do what is within your power as a parent. And you're the advocate for your child. So you're the mama, you're the daddy. So make a clean haven and pull all that dairy out.

And then the next, well, all along you're doing real food, not Franken food with, you can't even read all the ingredients, weirdo chemical stuff. And then look at gliadin or gluten.

even if it's organic, please just take it out and see what happens and go the distance, go the six weeks and then think about what you can put on the skin and potentially even orally, oral glutathione.

So there you have it. Yeah, I love that. So I know we said a whole lot of things and I know this can feel really heavy maybe on a mom or a parent who feels like after hearing this, they feel like they've done everything wrong.

They're the reason their kid is sick. What kind of compassion or hope do you have for a mom who's just feeling that? Oh my gosh, number one, that's mama guilt.

And you just stop because we're not meant to function in fear because fear paralyzes us. And when we cast shame on ourselves, what good does that do? So look at yourself in the mirror, mom, dad, and just say, I love my kids.

I'd lay down my life for them. So here's what we're going to do. Whether they like it or not, we're going to start creating a sanctuary of healing in our home.

Whoever you are, it is within your power to do that. So start with what you can control, which is what goes in your child's mouth while they're with you.

Okay? And set them up for success. And then you can do your best as far as that's concerned. And then I would just say try small zones and you can do either oral glutathione or topical.

But if that's not cutting the mustard or your child is horribly, horribly inflamed and you need more care, Feel free to get in touch with us. But one more piece that we haven't talked about, which is a big deal, is that you may live in a home that looks uber clean, okay?

But there may be lurking within your air conditioning system, in your air conditioning ducts, your heating ducts. there may be mold or bacteria growing within the walls of your home, even if it's a brand new home.

So you've got to look at your environment. And depending on where you live, you know, people say mold's

everywhere. Yep, it sure is. But when you're inside a home, or an apartment or a condominium or a townhome where you control the humidity, you want the humidity to not be too high because all you got to do is just add humidity and drywall, you know, cellulose, the stuff on drywall, sheetrock feeds those organisms.

And that could be what is literally within the biofilm of your child's skin. Well, and I'm so glad you went there because that was literally my next question was, does environment play a part in that?

And so you can check your environment, but you were saying the biofilm, the skin. So do you have anything else about the environment that we should be aware of or are there things to look for?

Well, when you look at the skin, if also on, let's say if a parent or other children in the family don't necessarily have eczema, or they might, in addition to it, if people have dandruff, cradle cap, blackheads, whiteheads, you know, really greasy, like our face and our scalp.

If those things are also there, within the interior of a water damage building is a family of bacteria called actinomycetes. And when we do our special little skin swab, that's a DNA analysis of the biofilm of the skin, we see all kinds of nasty little boogers show up.

And then we correlate that with what we might see in the house. And so there is a way to move forward, and there's a way to get rid of these nasty boogers.

But start with what made you vulnerable to get the eczema to begin with, which is the lack of glutathione. As we come to a close with everything that you said, I really appreciate that you've given so many insights and perspectives that you can come from, whether that be the environment, if they've already done the gluten and dairy removal, or the glutathione, maybe there is a lack of glutathione in the system.

cannot wait until we do future episodes talking about bug bites and all the things like that, because that's where I saw a huge issue with glutathione not being in my body.

And so we'll have so many things going on. But what I love that you said is that the bite size things to go with is waving off any guilt and shame they have and just starting.

Right? Starting with the home, starting with what they control. And I just love that you said glutathione is one of my favorite supplements, and I love that it can be supportive in this way.

Hope, practical next steps, and closing

So would you have any last closing words of hope for if you were sitting across from someone who was struggling with eczema, whether they're listening to this podcast at 2 o'clock in the morning, because at this point they have Googled everything they can, would you have anything left to say to them?

I will say that using a blend of everything in our arsenal, like certain types of antihistamines, we're trying to avoid Benadryl, but you've got Claritin, you've got Zyrtec, which aren't supposed to make you sedated.

There's also hydroxyzine, which can be given at night. Sometimes you have to calm things down. Those lifestyle modifications are needle movers. And if you've done lots of things or if you're in that, you know, there's a lot of things out on the internet and people try to Google things or research AI.

But you know what, that will not provide you with everything you need. to know your precision genetics, but you can move the needle drastically with a few things.

So, number one, stop the blame because my kids, I'm the tree and they're the little apples and their dad. And so, you know, I spent many years with struggling with the perfectionism because my brain was so dang inflamed.

You know, it was like I knew all these things, but I couldn't translate it to my heart. So I would say perfection is the

enemy of progress. You're going to hear that over and over again.

So I like what you said, Lauren, just starting because just getting going and that means you're just not going to buy anything. I kind of went a little radical and just threw a bunch of stuff away because it was like, this is tempting for me.

I'm getting rid of it. My family was angry with me when I threw the sugar and the flour out, but I'm like, I'm dying. I need to change this and I want to have more children.

And by God's grace, I got some. But when you have a child that's suffering, there's always something more that can be done. And if they're in this cycle of the steroid, cream, topical thing, a lot of times we transition over to intramuscular injections as we wean.

So that doesn't suppress what we call the hypothalamic-pituitary axis. So we give the body the ability to mount a response. and stop squelching the natural response that needs to be there, because that's our main problem.

Thank you so much, Dr. K, for your time. And as you dive into a topic that is just so complex, but I love that you addressed it from a multi-system, multi-symptomatic, and how that they can really start somewhere.

And I really appreciate your time. Thank you. Well, thank you, Lauren. It's always a pleasure. Whether you're listening in the car line or on the way to work, or in the middle of the night worried about your child, Please know you're not alone.

Start with one small change. Want the links to all the wonderful tips in the episode? Make sure to check out the show notes. If you found this useful, share it with another parent and subscribe so you don't miss our next episode.

And remember, there's always hope for healing.