What If Food Made You Feel Amazing Instead of Frustrated? 5 Best Foods for Eczema This Summer Transcript

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Introduction: Food, Eczema, and Summer Healing

Eliminating foods is not a healing strategy, friends. It's a starting point at best, and at worst, it is making your child significantly sicker. And today we're talking about what actually heals, what you can do to actually help your children heal this summer.

And before we dive in, if you've ever stood in front of the fridge and you're wondering what you can actually feed your child without triggering a massive flare, I made something for you.

It's my free eczema fighting foods by season guide. and it's organized by time of year. So if you're here in the United States or in Northern Hemisphere and we're kicking off summer, go to that section.

And if are down under, then do the reverse and you can grab it in The Show Notes. That's the only place to get it. Find the link in show notes and let's get into today's episode.

Is your child struggling with itchy nights and endless flare-ups? I'm Andra McHugh, mom of four and host of eczema kids. Here, you'll find natural solutions that actually work so you can heal your children's ectomote without steroids, without the overwhelm, and finally see calm, healthy skin again.

Let's get into it! I'm so glad that you're here today, friends, because this episode has been on my heart for a really long time, and I think it's going to help shift something for you.

Because if you are honest and you think about food and your child's eczema specifically, what is that first feeling that comes up? I know for me, it was a lot of angst.

It was lot a of actual fear, physical fear.

Why Elimination-Only Diets Backfire

I would feel my hear fluttering a little extra, I could actually feel the cortisol in my body going up. every time I had to feed my kids, which was often.

And I know it's the same for you. I now for everyone I talk to, the feeling isn't excitement. It's dread and it is exhaustion and its that familiar pit in your stomach and you're going into each meal just thinking, okay, is this going to be something that's tolerated or is it going add this to the list of things that she can't have?

And you're thinking about that birthday party where your kid is just standing there and there's just nothing on their plate. And I so get that because that's how we've been taught to think about eczema and food.

It's through the lens of elimination and through lens restriction. No dairy and no gluten and eggs and nuts and know this and that and the other thing.

The thing is some of that guidance is very, very real. There's some textbook, you know, inflammation drivers. eczema triggers and I don't even like to use that word because your child's exima is not because of the food, right?

It's not cause gluten or tomatoes or nuts. it's because they no longer have the capacity to break down those foods. So in the meantime, before the resiliency and the opacity is rebuilt, there are some foods that will trigger more inflammation, the inflammation that we are trying to quell down to silence so that can get some sleep.

There is truth in that and I'm not dismissing that at all. But when elimination is the only lens we use, it backfires, friends. And I know you know this, I you're living this.

It backfires in a few really important ways. The first is emotional. When every conversation about food is about what you can't have, you start to feel like food the enemy.

You're starting to program those things into your subconscious into their subconscious and your child starts to feel like food is the enemy and eating becomes very, very stressful, which then inhibits digestion, you know?

And meal times are a battlefield and stress and cortisol are some of the biggest eczema drivers that there are. So the anxiety surrounding the food restriction can easily cause the very flares that you are trying so hard to prevent.

So you're doing it all right and you are managing this condition with just as much care as you possibly can and then it's still not working and that is one of the most defeating feelings that a parent can have.

And I want to talk about something really specific because you guys know this and understand this. I see this happen over and over again and it breaks my heart every time.

That's IgG food sensitivity testing done too early before the gut has had a chance to heal or just calm down even in the slightest bit. And if you back up for a second, IgG is an antibody, okay?

And your immune system produces IgE as a response to proteins that it's been exposed to. You've likely taken your child to an allergist before and they're testing for Ig-E antibodies.

That's a true allergy. Igg is something different. So an IgG food sensitivity test looks at how many of these antibodies that your body has made against different foods.

So in theory, a high Igg reaction to a food suggests that you're immune system has been responding to it repeatedly. But where it gets complicated in kids with eczema is their gut lining is compromised.

That's a 100%, okay? We call this intestinal permeability, okay, or leaky gut is the common term, so when the gut lighting is damaged or inflamed, which if you're exhibiting exima symptoms, it is, tiny gaps open up between the cells of the intestional walls.

Why IgG Testing Is Too Early for Many Kids

Those junctions become looser and they're supposed to be tight and the food particles the proteins that should have been properly broken down and absorbed are slipping through the gaps before they're ready and then when that happens the immune system sees these proteins and goes wait that doesn't belong here and it mounts a big response and that is the flare that you're seeing it makes IgG antibodies and not because these foods are inherently problematic for your child right there is nothing problematic about celery or broccoli But because the gut is damaged, these proteins are getting through in the form that the immune system just doesn't recognize.

And when you run an IgG panel on a child whose gut has been actively inflamed for years, months, weeks and is leaky, the report comes back lit up like a Christmas tree.

You're going to see very high reactions to 30, 40, 50 healthy foods. Healthy, nutritious foods are going be lit as red or yellow. And suddenly you're not just eliminating dairy and gluten, these known inflammatory foods, you are also eliminating broccoli and blueberries and mango and chicken.

And in a lot of cases, foods that aren't part of the problem, they're actually part the solution, right? To recover from a disease like eczema, it is required that your diet consists of a variety of antioxidants and fats and proteins.

I mean, you want the most varied diet possible. that is part of the solution. That is what gives that body the resiliency and the capacity to start to digest the foods that are a little harder down the road.

And when you go through these tests too early, now meal times aren't just stressful, they are impossible because you're trying to feed a child with a list of safe foods.

So short, there's like four things on there and you don't even know where to start. And the cruelest irony is that the very foods that you are eliminating, the vegetables and the whole foods and range of nutrients, are exactly what your child's gut needs to repair itself.

and to rebuild that intestinal lining and calm the immune system down. It's such a cruel twist of fate. And this is why we do things the way that we did things.

We do testing later because you have to do the groundwork. You have too calm down that systemic inflammation. Give your body a break. Get the most nutrient-dense, easily digestible foods in there first for a period of time before you will see any sort of clarity on testing, not to mention this saves hundreds, if not thousands of dollars when you do it this way.

Cause a lot of times these kids don't need to do food testing in this. So no matter what the motivation is, I recommend waiting on this, okay? Because I just don' want you to fall into the cycle where you're removing the medicine to treat the symptom and the gut stays damaged and skin stays inflamed and you are exhausted and confused and doing everything the test told you and then nothing is getting better.

Again, this is just a timing problem. IgG is a very useful tool. We use it. Absolutely. But not before we do this groundwork. And to be clear, IgE is very a useful tools.

I use that alongside another very in-depth test that measures a different part of the immune system to get a whole picture of what's happening. not before we do this groundwork, okay?

And also, we run it with the intention of faster healing, and then in eventual reintroduction. That is the goal, is pharmaceutical-free, food- free kids, always.

That's what it means is that we're healing the gut first. We're restoring the intestinal lining. we are reducing that systemic inflammation. And then once the got is more intact, you might find that some of these reactive foods aren't actually a problem at all anymore because the guy is no longer letting them through in a way that sets the immune system off in an alarm and then eventually a skin flare.

And then if you were to look at this practically, I mean, you're focused on only removing things. You're not focused adding things in. And as I mentioned previously, these kids, they have not been absorbing the nutrients from their food for quite some time.

Therefore, the need the most nutrient dense possible. on top of also supplemental supports, because diet is just unfortunately not enough in the cases that I see that are always on the more severe side.

Nourishing Instead of Restricting

And for your sanity, for you child's sanity and for faster healing, it is so helpful to focus on what you add, like the foods that actively support your child skin and their gut lining and immune system.

And that's where the real healing happens. The bounty is so great. There are so many foods that you can eat that are not just you, can it's also delicious and beneficial all in one.

So many reasons as the system works, it works with the body. Because a child that's eating this highly restricted diet is often a childhood who's missing the exact nutrients that their body is needing to repair their missing zinc for skin barrier function.

They're missing vitamin A for immune regulation. Their missing omega-3 fatty acids to calm down their systemic inflammation. And they need the most diverse forms of fiber to feed the beneficial bacteria to keep the immune

system balanced.

It all works together, always. And that's why it just doesn't work to restrict your way into healing. You have to nourish your weight there, especially with these growing bodies.

So I want to offer you a completely different lens because we know that the old way doesn' work. And instead of asking what can't my child eat, I wanna ask what foods make us feel amazing and what if we focused on what we can have and.

What those foods can actually do, not just our child's skin, but their overall health. and vitality and longevity, right? Because that shift from deprivation to abundance, that's what changes everything.

It changes how your child relates to food and it changes, how you relate to, food. And it, changes the way that you feel when you're preparing the food, and, it change the, way, the that food sincerely, neutralize the body, how it functions in the, body how the cells respond to it and it opens this door to a whole new way of thinking and ultimately healing.

So that's what we're doing. Instead of obsessing over removing things, we are focusing on loading up the best stuff. So when your child's plate and their gut is full of foods that support their skin barrier and reduce inflammation and feed the good bacteria their immune system depends on, there is less room for the foods cause a problem or things that aren't actually food, right?

And you're crowding out the bad by adding in the Good. especially on these little growing bodies, this is the best strategy. It's not about being naive or ignoring triggers by any means, it's about building a foundation of healing foods so strong that your child's body becomes more resilient over time.

And a resilient gut does not leak and a resilience immune system doesn't overreact. and a resilient skin barrier holds moisture in and keeps irritants out.

And it's smooth and clear and comfortable on top of that. Because food isn't just fuel. It's also information. Every bite that your child takes sends a signal to their body, to the immune system, their gut lining, and to skin cells.

Processed foods send a sign that says Inflammation is normal here. Refined sugar sends a signal that dysregulates the immune response, but colorful, whole seasonal foods, they send an entirely different signal.

They say, we have what we need. We can repair, Wee can regulate, wee can heal. And right now we a massive opportunity because it is the start of summer and summer is, the most abundant anti-inflammatory season of food that there is.

this is when all the fruits and vegetables are harvested. They're naturally in season right now and they are loaded with the exact nutrients, the cooling agents, anti-oxidants, and the water and fiber and carbohydrates that your child's body needs in this time in the season.

So I want to add on to this add-in mindset. I wanna add in awareness of circadian rhythm eating and seasonal eating. Because when you put those three things together, that is when families really start to see change.

Circadian Rhythm and Seasonal Eating

It's sincerely miraculous. There's a reason for seasoned friends. Like it really does exist. And I want to talk about circadian rhythm first because I know you've heard that term.

I it's thrown around often, but what it means is your body's internal clock. We are circadan beings. beings, and it's the biological system that runs on roughly a 24-hour cycle and tells your body when to sleep and when awake and to digest and repair.

The gut has its own circadian clock, your skin has it other circadian clock and the bacteria in your microbiome have their own circuitian rhythms and your immune cells have circadan rhythms.

And the whole system is designed to run in sync with the natural light-dark cycles of every day. And when those clocks are in sync, when you're eating and you are sleeping and moving in alignment with the natural light, your body's ability to regulate inflammation is dramatically better.

And the immune system is calmer and the gut lining repairs more efficiently. The skin barrier actually does its job. When those clock are out of sync inconsistent meal times, eating in the middle of the night, and artificial light is a big one that's disrupting the sleep cycle.

That whole system gets very dysregulated and dysregation in gut and the immune system is what is showing up on the skin. So you can see how all of these things play so integrally for the reversal of any disease, but certainly of eczema.

Because your gut microbiome, which is the community of bacteria that's living in your digestive system, has a 24-hour rhythm. And different species of bacterias are more active at different times of day.

So in practice, to help your child with reducing their systemic inflammation and ultimately reversing eczema, circadian rhythm eating looks like front loading the calories, right?

They want the bigger breakfast and lighter meals in the evening. And that's because the digestive system is more active in them morning part of the day.

The digestive enzymes are in peak production and gut motility is the strongest and your body is primed to absorb nutrients. in the earlier part of the day.

So when we feed our kids late, we're asking their bodies to do all the heavy lifting when they're biologically trying to wind down. This doesn't have to be perfect or rigid, and with kids it never is, right?

But in everything that we are doing, We're trying our best to work with our child's biology instead of against it. So that's why we're talking about this now.

Circadian eating isn't, you know, a trend. It's working with the architecture of your child's body and giving it its best chance to actually repair in the evening, which is designed to do.

And I want to talk about seasonal eating. it's one of my favorite topics. It's so simple and it's powerful. And every time I talk about it and everytime I learn something new, everytimes that I'm talking about with a client or on somebody else's podcast, I just think what a divinely orchestrated miracle the bounty is and our relationship is with our outdoor environment because it's so powerful, but it is something that we've almost completely lost touch with in our modern life.

And we know this for most of human history. People ate what was growing around them. There was no other choice. That's not an accident. The foods that grow in each season contain the exact micronutrients and the antioxidants and bacteria and compounds that our bodies need during those different times of year.

So in summer right now, our body needs hydration to cope with the heat. And we need antioxidants to protect our cells from the UV exposure and oxidative stress.

We need foods naturally cooling and anti-inflammatory. That is what's growing right now, the watermelon and the cilantro. Like it's not random. It's sincerely extraordinarily intelligent.

That's amazing. And there's another layer because eating seasonally exposes your child's microbiome to this very diverse rotating cast of plant fibers throughout the year and diversity of fiber.

We talked about this before, but it's one of the most important drivers of microbiome diversity. And a diverse microbiomes is a resilient microbiom. A resilient micro biome means a regulated immune system.

Regulated immune systems means no eczema. It means less tantrums. All the things that are undesirable. much less. And, you know, going back to what can your child have, they can have so much and it's exciting.

It's liberating and joyful to serve food and cook food this way. They can't have all the fruits and vegetables that are loaded with polyphenols and antioxidants that reduce all of the oxidative stress.

All the berries, all that pineapple and mango and all All the things that are available at the grocery store now, the stone fruits and watermelon, it's 92% water.

And for kids with eczema who have that compromised skin barrier, that loses water more rapidly than typical skin. Hydrating from the inside out is not optional.

This is required. Another one of our favorites is cucumber. It's another deeply hydrating food.

Best Summer Foods for Eczema-Prone Kids

Its over 95% of water and it has silica, which is a mineral that supports the structure of the skin and the hair and connective tissue in you can. slice it up and dip it in something that they love and make it fun.

There's zucchini and summer squash. You just, they're so gentle in the gut. They're very rich in vitamin C and beta carotene, which converts to vitamin A.

And it's a critical nutrient for the skin barrier. It's critical for skin-barrier integrity and for immune regulation. So ideally sneak that into as much as you can.

Fatty fish, if your family eats it, summer is a really great time for salmon and sardines and mackerel. Omega-3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA in these fish are among the highest and well-researched anti-inflammatory compounds that we have, and they directly support the skin's lipid barrier and reduce the production of inflammatory cytokines.

And they've been shown in so many studies to reduce eczema's severity. And all the fresh herbs, basil, mint, parsley, cilantro, they aren't garnishes.

They are antioxidant powerhouses. And the more things that you can incorporate these into, the better. That's just a tiny section of the seasonal list.

that would be appropriate for your eczema prone skin. There's so much the bounty is so great. It is not deprivation. there is sincere abundance that is summer on a plate and that color and sweetness and crunch and nourishment and And that is how you literally shift your child's not only their way of thinking and their cellular response, but they're also their taste buds.

You shift their tastes buds so they start to crave these nutrient-dense nourishing foods and you help break their addiction to food-like products. And it's one of the best things that you can possibly do for your You know, eating a bowl of blueberries isn't going to heal your child's skin overnight, if only, right?

That'd be amazing. But there is a compound effect of nourishment, and that compound affect happens so much faster and so greater with kids. And every anti-inflammatory meal is vote for your children's healing.

And every meal eaten in rhythm with the day is a signal to the body that it is safe enough to repair, to dedicate energy and resources to prepare. And, every time they eat a seasonal whole of real food, they're saying to themselves, we have what we need.

And it's that. It's the small choices made consistently over time. That is how healing happens and it is something

that you can just start with your next meal.

And that's how we reverse this from home, guys. This is step one, okay? And then there's so much more that we can do on top of that and so many more is required.

But this is an integral step. Step one. First step, it has to be taken. I always need to remind myself, I need remind my husband because people get tired and You know, kids get complaining and they get tired and, they want their quick fix and we have to just be so cognizant of our language.

And that starts with just the positive thinking that seedling of a, what can we add? What would make this better versus what we can't have? Oh no, that's going to cause a flare type of mentality.

but you have full control over that. It's how you show up at meal times and the kids are just so attuned to our energy around food and really around anything.

And when we're excited about something that sparks curiosity and when were fearful and restrictive, they get anxious and resistant. So before we even deal with food, we are going to lead with excitement and intention.

That's the best we can do. And I have something for you that will help you do just that. My free eczema fighting foods by season guide is simple. It's a beautiful resource that you can just put on your fridge that lists the fast foods for your child's skin in every season of the year, including what we talked about today for summer.

Closing Thoughts and Free Guide

and it takes the guesswork completely out of seasonal eating and gives you a starting point that can actually use all the foods on there are recognizable.

There is nothing crazy on there, guys. So go grab it for free at the link in the show notes. It's not directly linked anywhere in this site. I'm working on it.

But follow the links in shownotes, print it out, put it on your fridge, and let it guide your summer and your meal times in fall and spring, too. And I really hope that this episode gave you a new way to think about food and child's eczema.

Just not as a minefield, but as sincere medicine. This is sincere therapy on all levels, right? And it's not restriction, it is abundant, and it sincerely isn't something to fear.

It's something you can lean into with curiosity and even joy. We can do this, friends. And our kids are watching and they're learning, they are absorbing all the time.

and your child's body is responding to its environment and you have more power to shift that environment than you've ever been told. You are the only one that has the power.

To shift the environment, you're the CEO of the household and on all levels, everything that you physically do and curate and emotionally do, and say.

All of it matters. All it. So we're doing it, friends. We're healing the gut. And we are working the clock and we eating with the season and adding in the good and, we'll see what happens over time.

But you're going to like the results. Thank you so much for being here, Friends. It is such a pleasure to talk to you and I will talk you next week. Take care.

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.