Why Everyone Is Toxic: The Invisible Burden Affecting Modern Life Transcript

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Introduction to Toxic Burden and Healing Terrain

Detoxification really does require specific nutrients, and it requires energy. And the problem here that I think we're seeing, where I told you, like, my main objective is to help people get their energy back, get the brain working, Get their digestive symptoms solved.

A lot of this is created by toxins, right? So how are they affecting our health? Have you heard this before, Emily? Your body whispers before it screams.

Symptoms are only part of the story. I'm Dr. Drew Kidder. And I am Dr Emily Hernandez. On the healing terrain, we explore deeper systems influencing clinical outcomes, from toxic burden and microbial imbalance to the foundational factors that drive resilience and long-term health.

Hi everyone, I am Dr. Emily Hernandez, naturopathic doctor and clinical educator, Director of Healthcare Practitioner Education for Cellcore Biosciences.

I'm here on the Healing Terrain podcast with Laura Frontero. Really excited to have her on. She is an expert in toxins and looking at the body holistically, really working on drainage detoxification.

So I's so excited have to her insight here. Laura, welcome. Tell us a little bit about you and your expertise. Hi. I'm so glad to be here. Thank you. So I am a retired nurse practitioner.

Though I worked in Western medicine for two decades, I caught the functional medicine bug.

Laura's Background and Clinical Focus

And once I got the bug, there was no cure for that. Right, so I transitioned out of Western medicine completely. And now what I do is I work with people around the world in virtually helping them get back their energy, fix their slow sluggish brain, solve their digestive issues, and really feel like they did when they were younger.

Again, I mean, that's really the name of the game. How do we get people feeling like we did it when we were 20? That's incredible. And it's funny. I mean, I feel like all of my patients these days have those symptoms, those same symptoms you just mentioned, right?

It's just so common. So, you know, that brings me to my first question is, we keep talking about toxins these day. Is this just another health trend or is there really something to this?

Is there something actually changed in our environment? It's crazy, right? Because we actually live in the cleanest looking world in history. When we think back to what it was hundreds of years ago, a thousand years, you know, we've come a long way with cleanliness, but we also live the most chemically complex time in history, and I'll give you just a few stats.

I promise I won't bore with a bunch of stats, but according to a 2020 global analysis, there's more than 350,000 chemicals and chemical mixtures registered for production and use around the world.

And in the United States alone, which is where you and are at, the EPA has a 2025 inventory list of more that 86,00 chemicals with over 42,0000 of them used actively in commerce.

And this isn't slowing down. So a 2020 analysis, this is just six years ago, right?

Why Toxins Matter in Modern Life

And these things need to be updated. But six-years ago an analysis found that 700 new chemicals are added to the US inventory each year. We are in a time of chemical production and chemical use.

And here's what I'd say, Emily, it's not one toxin that's the problem, right? So everybody is worried about eating organic food because they don't want to have pesticides and herbicides in their food.

When we think about herbicide, we're thinking about the most famous one, glyphosate, and yes it wreaks havoc on the body and pokes holes in the gut and just destroys mitochondria.

But really what we're dealing here with is a thousand small exposures every day, right? So it's everywhere. It's in the air, it in in water, in food, cross-contaminated into organic crops.

In the skincare products we use, cookware, packaging that our food is coming to us from the store in. Its literally a whole bunch of little exposers. If we were all to think of each of us wearing an invisible backpack, It's just getting heavier and heavier over time.

It is getting an equivalent accumulation. So the problem isn't one exposure, it's an accumulative burden. Right. I think the big important thing here for all of our listeners to remember is it is not one toxin that changes our health.

Its thousands of small exposures that slowly fill us up until our body cannot keep up. To answer the question, is a health trend It's hard not to think it's a health trend because when you look on social media and everybody's got an Instagram or a TikTok or Facebook account and you go on there, I mean I don't know about you but my feed is full of people talking about toxins, giving me strategies to reduce toxins and telling me that I'm going to die because of toxins.

Pretty much. It's overwhelming, isn't it? I remember getting out of environmental medicine class in naturopathic school and being like, my gosh, I feel like I don't want to eat anything.

I want breathe. You just want live in a bubble. It is overwhelming. The next question is What do we do if we know we are exposed to all these new toxins that are constantly coming out plus all the other ones that have been in circulation?

First, I would say, how is it really impacting and affecting our health? How do you kind of control that overwhelm? So, it's affecting us for sure. And I think the first thing to remember, instead of getting into overwhelm, is to Remember that your body is intelligent, and your Body is always trying to protect you.

There is a way out of this, right? We are not doomed to die a toxic death because our bodies are ever evolving and intelligent and trying To protect us.

But detoxification really does require specific nutrients and it requires energy. And the problem here that I think we're seeing, where I told you, like my main objective is to help people get their energy back, get the brain working, and get there digestive symptoms solved.

A lot of this is created by toxins, right? So how are they affecting our health? Have you heard this before, Emily? Your body whispers before it screams.

So the whisper is, my energy is low, I can't sleep very well anymore. I wake up in the middle of the night, i'm constipated. i've got bloat. My brain just doesn't work as quickly as it used to. I'm moody.i'm fine one minute.

The next minute, i am angry or i am tearful.

How Toxic Load Affects Energy and Symptoms

my skin feels like it's aging faster.my joints don't feel good. My skin looks older. So this is the Whisper Before the Scream. The scream is the chronic health conditions that are brewing under, so the body's telling you this is

something's not right, something is happening, and the scream, is a full-blown autoimmune disorder.

The Scream is an inflammatory bowel disorder like Crohn's. The scream is the diagnosis of anxiety or depression. The screen is even further down the road is cancer, is neurodegenerative disorders like dementia.

Um, the scream his heart disease. right? So it builds. So those of you who are resonating with me right now that, oh, I'm having a whisper, this is your call to action to do something about it.

And so I touched for a second that detoxification requires energy and nutrients. I think this something that's really important for us to talk about, Emily, because when your body's toxic burden exceeds its capacity, and those symptoms begin, you're going to be burning through nutrients.

You could be eating the healthiest diet in the world and getting lots of protein. I mean, right now, everywhere you go, it's like, eat more protein, which is important for those amino acids.

But guess what? When you talk your body needs more amino acids. So you're trying to get in. It's like a full-time job to eat enough protein and to enough antioxidants and diversity and foods that our gut wants.

But you need more because you are toxic and your bodies trying solve it. You burn nutrients faster when you toxic. And then when your burning nutrients fast when toxic, Those nutrients that help us feel energetic and feel good, they just aren't there anymore.

So people assume that they're getting older when their body is actually just carrying a huge burden. Wow. Yeah, that's so insightful. And I love that description.

It's like trying to fill up a car, but the fuel tank has a hole in it or something, right? Or like you're still burning the engine. Tell me then, as we're talking about toxins and how we are all exposed, Why do some people seem to tolerate environmental exposures just fine, or maybe they just have the whisper that they're not really listening to?

But while others develop these screaming kind of symptoms, like the fatigue, the brain fog, you know, digestive issues, hormonal imbalances that you mentioned.

Yeah, you know, a good analogy here, A lot of people use it. I don't even know who first came up with this analogy. So I didn't know how to give credit to, but it's the bucket analogy, right?

That we're all carrying around a bucket. But all of our buckets are a little bit different. Like, Emily, your bucket might be a different shape and a difference size than my bucket, and what's really driving the shape in size of the budget and how much toxic load it can hold is genetics, so genetics play a role.

But also, there's other things that play a role. It's your lifetime of, I would say, lifestyle habits and how you grew up and then what you did in your 20s and 30s, and 40s.

Why People React Differently to Exposures

So think about, did I get adequate nutrition all along? Was I nourished as a child? was I nurtured in my 20's? I mean, i don't ever remember eating a single healthy thing when I was in college.

I also don t remember drinking a glass of water. I saw this funny thing on Instagram once, like, I don't remember drinking a glass of water in college.

I went to college in the early 90s. We didn't have water bottles. we didn t tote around water. And it was very rare to buy water or to carry water. So it's hilarious.

If you were in college in the early 90s, you get it, right? So every one of us, our bucket looks a little different due to our lifestyle. Did we have gut health issues early on in childhood?

I know I did. I had terrible allergies as a child. And now knowing what I now, I have got dysbiosis from a very early age. In fact, have a crazy story.

Even pulled a parasite out of my nose when I was like 12 years old. Oh my gosh, no way. That's a whole crazy story, right? Allergies, terrifying. I could blow my nose, but I didn't know it was a parasite at the time.

So I can blow nose like a champion when I was kid because I had such bad allergies. You know, a lot of kids, they try to blow their nose and they just end up blowing through their mouth and it's kind of silly.

Well, I couldn't honk like full, full like hard blow because always full of snot and I'm always trying to get it out, which I know now total gut dysregulation, gut biosis.

So here I am one day, blowing my nose, and my mom yells from the other room, Stop! Because it was just, something was stuck in there, Emily. Something was in my sinuses and I couldn't get it out.

So I knew I had one more hard blow that I could give before I have to stop because my Mom was mad. I took a deep breath and blew as hard as I And it dislodged, I felt it, it moved and it was hanging out of my nose and I proceeded to pull a parasite that was this long out my sinuses.

And I thought, that's a really long booger. Yeah, right. And okay, this was like 1984. We didn't have cell phones, I didn' take a picture of it, we didn t even have a Polaroid, w didn''t have that kind of money to have.

I had no way, like I d' even think to go grab a camera and take Yes. And so then later when I learned about parasites and I studied them and saw what sinus parasites look like, I was like oh gosh, that's exactly what I pulled out of my nose when i was a kid.

So anyways, why am I talking about Parasites right now? Because Parasites are toxin mops, toxins sponges. They hold toxins in our bodies. So people with toxic load also have parasites.

But anyhow, the main question you asked was why are some people fine while others react to everything? two people can have the exact same exposure but very different outcomes because their capacity is different.

So the whole point of this is my capacity, is very differently than yours, Emily. I had major gut issues, I have parasites as a kid, major major seasonal allergies, i had constipation, like I've had some issues.

My capacity to tolerate toxins as an adult may be completely different to yours and I don't know your history but I'm just using you as example. But that's why you can have two people in the exact same family even where one reacts to the scented candle or reacts the new car smell or react to you go to department store and you walk through the perfume aisle and your just overcome because the smell is making you sick.

But your partner, your spouse or your child or you mom or they might be just fine and be like, what's your deal, Laura? Why are you so sensitive? I mean, those of us who don't do well with toxins, we get labeled the difficult ones, right?

We're high maintenance, We bring our own food to the party. We, you know, bring your own salad dressing. we do all the things because we just know our bodies don t do.

Well, so, it really comes down to that bucket that we've acquired and your genetics big time.

Common Detox Myths and Misconceptions

Yeah. And I get a lot of patients like that where, just like you said, you know, they may have issues with, and myself included, like I hate the smell of any kind of additional fragrance.

My husband's always like, what's the big deal? It gives me an instant headache. Like I just, I can't. Yeah. And

genetics, we didn't really touch on it, and I'm not a geneticist, but what I am talking about with genetics is your detox pathways, your mitochondria health, you gut genetics.

All of that plays a role in your ability to detox. So just a quick nod to that. I mean, there are some pretty significant factors when it comes to genetics And I will say that I think sometimes people hear that and they're like, oh, well, genetics, like there's nothing I can do about it, right?

Like I'm stubborn. And although, yes, you can't change your genes, there is that whole world of epigenetics, which is about how genes turn on and turn off and how they are expressed.

So there are still a lot we can, do even if you maybe are like crap, I am that person that has, that genetic predisposition that reacts to everything.

You're not totally doomed. It may be a little bit harder. to the ability to clear things like we're talking about, but epigenetics, right? It's about feeding the body what it needs so that those genes can work as well as they can or turn the ones off that are not serving you in the right ways.

So now I know my genetics, so now, I pay attention to what I do and I work with them instead of against them. I absolutely take measures to support myself.

Yeah, awesome. I just always like to talk about epigenetics. Sometimes people are like, oh my gosh, I can't do anything. Okay, great. So that's super helpful to know.

Some people aren't going to respond maybe more significantly because they have that lifestyle that they've kind of from early age on where they had exposure to water damaged buildings or they'd eaten a diet that wasn't as well as they need to be eating or have genetic predispositions.

That's kind why people respond differently. There's also a lot of misinformation I feel like around detox. So what is the biggest misconception that people have about detox and what does it really take to support the body's natural detoxification processes?

So most people think that detox means buying supplements or doing a juice cleanse, that they're going to detox in a weekend or a week. And unfortunately, there's a lot of misinformation available on social media.

I get people all the time that come into my community and be like, well, you're telling me something different than chat GPT. Yes, I am. Don't take your health advice from ChatGPT.

I could go off on a tangent about who controls the flow of information into Chat GPT and I will tell you it's not the champions for functional medicine.

Supporting Detox Pathways and Drainage

It's the champions for Western medicine. So I'll just leave that there because we could go on a major tangent there. But please don't take your health advice from ChatGPT or from Google because they're not on the same side as you.

We'll leave it at that. People think that detox is this really simple thing. Here's good news. Your body already knows how to detox. You are actually wired to detox.

Unfortunately, we are now living in a world and having lifestyle practices that are making it harder for our bodies to do what they already know how to.

So the real question here is not like, are people making mistakes when they try to detox? The real answer here, is whether your detox pathways are supported.

That's what I want to say. It's not how do I detox, it's are my detox pathways supported? Because once you support yourself and open the drainage pathways, then your body can start to release toxins.

But I mentioned that some of the things we do in our lifestyle are preventing us from being able to detox. So one of the big ones is just sleep at this point and circadian rhythms.

So we all are in front of screens, like you and I are recording in a front screen right now. I've got a screen in the palm of my hand, I got another screen to the right of me in my studio, we're in from screens and sometimes I'm in in those screens.

until 10 o'clock at night, where I should be closing them down and stopping by five or six o´clock, and getting out of the blue light when the sun starts to go down.

So if we can reset our circadian rhythm, believe it or not, we could detox better. If we're not sleeping and our rhythm is messed up, then we are not detoxing.

So a lot of us are inside and we're not going outside, we are not moving our bodies. We're sitting still, were in front of computers and screens and so are our children.

They're no outside playing. I mean my parents used to kick us out and would go explore miles around our house in the woods that I lived in. And I would never let my daughter do that in 2005 when she was born.

There was no way she would be within a few feet of out of my sight because of the world that we live in now. We need to create bio flow in the body. We needed to poop every day.

we need be able to not only eat organic healthy food, we needed people to digest it and extract the nutrients out of it. That's another thing. People's digestion is just destroyed.

I mean, we test digestion in my clinic and my programs, and I will tell you, probably 75 to 80% have low pancreatic elastase. They have poor bile flow.

I know this because they've got high stay adequate on their gut test. We put people on butane HDL challenges and they need to take You know, they're getting up to 10, 12, 15, 17 butane HCLs and still not getting a reaction.

They have no hydrochloric acid. they can't even extract the nutrients out of food. If you can get the nutrient out the food, you cant detox. So opening your drainage pathways, being able to poop every day, getting your lymphatics flowing, Getting adhesions taken care of that are gumming up your fascia.

I mean that's a whole talk we could go into. But it's all about lymphatic, fascias, pooping. It's about breathing correctly. Most of us are sitting, shallow breathing, we're not even fully expressing air out of our lungs.

We have organ decline, our kidneys are not functioning well. People, go look at your lab and see what your GFR was. See if your creatinine is probably normal, but your gfr might be low, which means you're no able to actually even get toxins fully out the body.

So these are all the things that are stopping people from being able, the big mistakes, is just getting back to regular life. And I guess the final thing I would say is, when I say getting to back regular, what I mean is how our ancestors lived, right?

Like taking lessons from our ancestor's who rose with the sun, went to bed with sun who moved their bodies constantly. They were constantly in motion.

The ate real food from the earth with minimal processing. they just did things well for their bodies. But the other thing I would say is nervous system regulation.

If your system is stuck in sympathetic overdrive, fight or flight, you don't have a prayer to detox you. Yeah. And you bring up some just like amazing points, right?

It's like these basic necessities, but we're so far from it. Like even as you're talking about it, I'm like, you know, we are in the functional medicine world, all I do all day is sit in front of a screen and sit and you quickly eat while I am running up and down the stairs or attending to my kids and not sitting, not breathing, And so these are great reminders that, yes, there are detox programs and drainage and all that.

First Steps to Reduce Toxic Burden

We can get into that in a little bit too here. But if you're not doing the basics, the foundation, all of that stuff isn't going to work as it should.

It's not. Yeah, that's huge. All right. Well, I feel like I could talk to you all day and we're already getting close to our end of our 20, 25 minute talk here, but for those who are listening who want to reduce their toxic burden, without becoming overwhelmed, what are the most impactful first steps at least they can take?

Yeah, so simple things that cost no money. Well, minimal money, I would say eat more whole foods. These days, whole food are costing more than processed foods, which is a crime.

So put your dollars into eating real wholefoods and not processed food. Filter your water, and I'm not talking a countertop Brita filter, I am talking really purify your your fridge filter isn't enough either, so you should be distilling or doing reverse osmosis or something that's a little bit more impactful than that.

Prioritizing your sleep, it costs you nothing. to go to sleep at a good time every night and shut off your devices and TV and Shut off Netflix and actually pick up a real book and read it until it's time to Go to Sleep really prioritize that I can't say enough about sleep.

It's probably the most most impactful and underrated biohack that you can do to support yourself. Move your body. That's a huge one. I mean, even if you don't love and don t want to exercise, at least move your bod y.

And then, you know, just start to reduce your obvious chemical exposures one step at a time. You know choose the green and clean cleaning products for your home, body products, for you your skin care, your body care your makeup, change out your slowly one by one.

I don't say do this all at once because you'll have mutiny in your household if you start changing everything and your kids and you're spouses and everything.

What are you doing? So one thing at a time when something runs out change it out and just focus on progress not perfection. Nobody's perfect. You're never going to avoid the chemicals that are coming at you, all you can do is support your body.

So the goal isn't to live in fear or to create a perfectly toxin-free life. I don't expect that for myself and I would never expect for any of my community.

The goal is to build a body that's resilient enough to thrive in a world that we live where chemicals are here to stay. support the terrain, right? Support the train and do your best that you can to help remove those obstacles and then let your body, you know, do what it's innately meant to do.

So those are some amazing tips. Again, it looks like I know this stuff, but hearing it, piece, just kind of laid out like this, that's good reminders.

I always tell patients to like, instead of getting the receipts printed out, all those receips have those plastic coverings on them. Get them emailed to yourself or hit no on the gas, to that.

You don't need a receipt if you don' need it. just, yeah, all those little changes really go a long way. Because as you mentioned in the beginning, like this toxic burden is from these small continual exposures.

So if we can make these smaller changes of avoidance, it's going to eventually, you know, really help move things in right direction. Well, thank you so much for your time and your expertise.

Really appreciate learning more about what we're up against, but also how we really can help support our bodies so that they're doing what they are meant to do.

It's my pleasure, Emily. Thank you. Awesome. Well, thanks everyone. We'll see you next time on the Healing Terrain podcast. Take care.