

Dr. Sheila Kilbane

Changing the World of Pediatric Medicine

PODCAST SHOWNOTES

If you've ever struggled with what to feed your kids or grandkids or you have kids who keep getting the same health issues over and over again (ear infections, skin problems, GI issues, etc.), I've got the perfect guest for you today.

Dr. Sheila Kilbane is a board-certified pediatrician who trained with Dr. Andrew Weil at the University of Arizona Integrative Medicine Department. She works with families to use natural and nutritional therapies to get to the root of kids' health problems. Dr. Kilbane is changing the world of pediatric medicine by incorporating integrative medicine into her practice and creating online programs for families. She's also written a great book called *Healthy Kids, Happy Moms: A Step-by-Step Guide to Improving Many Common Childhood Illnesses*.

The whole world needs to know you because I've never seen this approach you take in a pediatric setting. The minute I stopped breastfeeding, my son started getting ear infections, and his doctors wanted to prescribe antibiotics. It seems like meds are often the only solution presented for parents. What is going on?

In conventional medicine, we are trained to treat symptoms or the disease. We don't study how to prevent infections to begin with. Integrative medicine is so powerful because we look at nutrition and stress factors to optimize the child's immune system, so when they get exposed to something, their body is robust and has a better chance of fighting it off without antibiotics.

How did you go from traditional schooling to integrative medicine?

I knew I wanted to be a doctor from the time I was little. I had done all of my training and was practicing, and I realized I was running from room to room, stressed out, seeing the same kids over and over with recurring ear infections, eczema, chronic runny nose, constipation, etc. I'd often prescribe an antibiotic or steroid and then see these same patients in my office for the same problems again the next month. One of my seven-month-old patients was experiencing recurring ear infections and eczema. His mom (who was breastfeeding) told me that she took herself off dairy and noticed that his eczema improved. I worked on figuring out how they could both get the calcium, fat, and vitamin D they needed without dairy and requested she stay off of dairy. He continued to get ear infections and we eventually referred him to get ear tubes. (With ear infections, it's important to pay attention to fluid in the ears, which can cause problems later on.) However, there was a snafu with her insurance and the ear tube surgery was cancelled. Right before his one year wellness check-up, the mom ate a huge omelet, and he experienced a big eczema flare. I thought that if dairy and eggs were causing his eczema to flare up, let's take him completely off of both eggs and dairy and see if the ear infections improved. Three weeks later, the fluid was gone from his ears, and he stopped having issues with eczema. He never needed to get ear tubes. I didn't understand the concept of systemic inflammation at the time, but knew I needed to learn more about how food and diet were impacting my patients' health.

After this case, how did you get the education and training that you needed?

Once I started implementing naturopathic practices and seeing these chronic issues melt away, I decided to do an Integrative Medicine fellowship with Dr. Andrew Weil at the University of Arizona. He has an incredible program, and I studied for two years about nutrition, herbs and supplements, and mind-body therapies. You want to scream it from the mountaintop the first time you see a child improve so profoundly just with nutritional changes! And JJ, it was listening to an interview Joe Polish did with you when you reviewed

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your approach with adults that I realized it was so similar to what I was doing with kids. I saw how you were able to take your methods to a bigger audience and it made me realize how many ways there are to get this information out there, because there aren't many pediatricians trained in this.

So often I work with adults to modify their diet and they tell me, "I can do this, but I still have to cook for my family." This is so confusing to me! This is what your family should be eating, too!

A lot of adults don't know to translate diet needs/recommendations to cooking for their kids. And as pediatricians we're trained to advise parents to give their kids 2-3 cups of milk a day. That's where I do a ton of education. I recently finished a book with a whole chapter on dairy, just so parents can understand there are other healthy ways for their kids to get calcium, vitamin D, and fat.

Exposure = preference. What are a couple tips you can give listeners for getting their kids to eat healthy?

The first thing we start off with is a smoothie in the morning. I often tell parents, "Just change one thing: just change breakfast." A lot of these kids are eating a bowl of cereal and milk for breakfast, which is a ton of carbohydrates. We begin with a starter smoothie, which is a few leaves of spinach, about half a banana, a cup of frozen berries, and water. That's going to be really sweet, and the goal is to decrease the sugar content. We end up going to a cup of spinach, a smidgen of a banana, and 5-6 frozen berries, so we're upping the greens and decreasing the sugar. Then we add in chia, hemp, or flax seed. I love to get coconut oil into kids this way as well, especially kids two years and under, because we want to make sure we're getting good saturated fats in them while their brains and nervous systems are still developing.

I'd love to hear a couple success stories.

Another great example is managing constipation. I will see kids who have been on a laxative for years. We take out dairy, give them good, healthy bacteria in the form of probiotics, increase omega-3 fats (often with fish oil), do a whole food supplement, possibly some magnesium, and it's like magic. I think of constipation, eczema, and recurring ear infections as a canary in the coal mine: I love to take care of those issues early on so we don't continue with systemic inflammation that gets left unchecked.

I had a 7 or 8 year old patient who was on a steroid and albuterol inhaler for asthma. All we did was remove dairy from his diet, re-inoculate his gut, give him a bit of magnesium, and he actually went off his inhalers.

What resources do you have available for people?

sheilakilbane.com

We have several easy online courses, a one hour Q&A all about ears and ear infections, a blog where I write about a lot of different cases, and a supplement store. (Keep in mind: I only have a few select products I've vetted for kids in the store.) We're always refining. If people have any questions, they can always email us through the website.

Today's Listener Question:

Marcy in MN asks: "I am having so much trouble getting my kids to eat healthy, and I don't want to create a war zone at dinner. I find I'm making two meals every night -- one for my husband and I, who like to eat healthy, and one for my kids. What do I do?"

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I am a mom, so I know the challenges of feeding children healthy foods. Let's face it, no toddler is going to sit down to a dinner of salmon with asparagus almondine. But remember, exposure equals preference. While you don't want to turn your dinner table into a war zone, you do want to keep introducing things to your kids and letting them try things. It could take you 15 times before they start to like these foods! Tell your kids it's something you want them to *try* -- no clean plate club -- just have them try it. What I've found is that if you need to put some almond cheese or grass-fed butter or marinara sauce on something so the kids like it better, super. See how you can sneak things in, such as the morning smoothie Dr. Kilbane talked about. If you're making a soup or burgers, add in some vegetables.

Involve them! There are so many fun things you can do with kids and cooking today, such as using a spiralizer to make zucchini noodles. Kids support what they create. So if you have them help you make these things, they are way more likely to eat them. I've found kids want to do the right thing and eat healthy, so if you teach them in a fun way, they are more likely to do it.

When my kids were growing up, I kept treats out of the house (sweets were something we had to go out for). I kept a lot of things at eye level for them, such as cut up celery, carrots, almond cheese, nuts, nut butters, and rice chips, so they had those things at eye level, which they could choose if hungry. I found things that they liked and built from there. Don't even bring those other things in the house.

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