Episode 100: Your Questions Answered on Circumcision, Vaccines, CBD & More
Child: Welcome to my Mommy’s podcast.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Healthy Moms podcast. I’m Katie from wellnessmama.com and you are listening to the 100th episode of this podcast. It’s been an amazing ride and I’m so honored that you guys are taking the time to listen and to learn about health and to improve things for your family and for the entire future generation. And in this episode, I will be answering a lot of questions that you guys sent in, to the best of my ability. And also tackling a couple controversial topics that I’ve really never touched on before, as well as sharing my favorite bits of wisdom from the last 99 episodes. I will try to keep it not too long, there’s a lot of questions, but I really appreciate you guys being here.

There will be links to all of this in the show notes for anyone who is wondering about a specific post I mentioned, and you can find those. I realized I have never explained where to find them. If you go to wellnessmama.com, click on the podcast tab, all of the podcast episodes are there and you’d find the episode you want the show notes for, click on the picture and you’ll have all the links and the transcript if you prefer to read. Or if you just aren’t an audio person, some people are not. So, I want to jump right in with the questions and also with the biggest takeaways.

First and foremost, I do wanna say I'm not a doctor, I'm not a lawyer, I don't play one on the Internet, I'm not giving medical advice. This is just from one mom to another sharing my opinion, and certainly do not consider anything I'm saying as medical advice. I won't present it as such, especially when it comes to the controversial topics. I think that each of us is required to do our own research. And for the sake of our kids, we really do need to put the time and the effort to do that.

And the answers that I found are that what's working best for my family, but they may not be the best for you or your family and at the end of the day we all have to do our own due diligence. So, I just wanted to preface with that. I'm not giving medical advice, please don't take my word or anyone else’s word completely at face value, and please do your own research when it comes, not just to health but every aspect of life. It's a good habit for all of us to get in.

So, somebody asked what my biggest takeaways were and favorite episodes. And it's really hard to narrow it down, because I have enjoyed every episode so much and I feel so honored to have gotten to talk to so many amazing guests and to share them with you guys, and to share their message. And also I feel like I've gotten to go through a kind of a college course of sorts when it comes to all these different health topics. So, just some of my favorites off the top of my head if you haven't listened, I love every single Saunacast that I've done. So if you haven't listened to these, I think they're worth finding and listening to.

I do these with one of my best friends in the world, Heather, who runs mommypotamus.com. And we just chat about topics that are relevant to us, everything from parenting to health to navigating new health trends. And they're just, they're really fun episodes, they're very typically pretty short, very light and a lot of fun. They're super fun to record and you guys seem to like listening to them as well.

Some other favorites that I've loved along the way, Dr. Cate Shanahan, we did an interview on the concepts behind her theories on deep nutrition and what humans really should be eating or not eating, and how
basically to live optimally as a human on this planet in today's world. Because we are living in a different world than our grandparents did and we're facing challenges that our grandparents did not face. And we know things like that today's men have a third of the testosterone that their grandfathers did. We're still trying to figure out why. But a lot of her theories are very backed by science, her research is very comprehensive and she really goes through why she believes the things she believes and gives some kind of actionable steps, so that was a good one.

Also, Dr. Kelly Brogan was a joy to interview, she was so much fun and she tackled some really tough topics in a way that made it seem like we were just having coffee at a coffee shop. So she talked about mental illness and balancing hormones, including postpartum depression and anxiety and depression. So she comes from a traditional medical background and does not prescribe antidepressants and psychotropic medications, so really fascinating perspective from her.

Another fun and really informative interview was Dr. Elisa Song. So she is my kids' pediatrician, even though she lives across the country, and she is a holistic pediatrician and really has good answers, very, I felt, balanced answers. Again, I think, especially when it comes to our children and pediatrics, it very much is an individualized thing, and each family has to make their own decisions. But I've personally found her perspectives very balanced and I really loved that interview with her. Also, I'm just gonna interject and say if we have any distractions, I...so here's the real life of a real podcaster. It's not glamorous, I'm actually hiding in a closet. We're at an event with some other bloggers and health influencers and there are 37 people, I believe, in one house, so it's not quiet. So I'm hiding in a closet with my microphone and my computer.

So hopefully we will not get any interruptions, but if we do that's real life and I will try not to edit them out. So, back to podcasts, the minimalism podcast with Joshua Becker was a lot of fun, mainly because I feel like the more children I have the more minimalist I feel like I need to become, just because obviously parenting takes a lot of mental energy and I've felt the need to reduce stress and clutter in other aspects of life, both mentally as far as having systems in organization to simplify my life but also as far as our physical environment and not having too much stuff. So I've been on a journey of minimalism but not extreme minimalism.

And Joshua Becker had a really balanced perspective on it. And he's not one that lives in a tiny house or has only five possessions that fit in this carry-on luggage. He has children. His children do have toys. He has a very balanced perspective but he really talks about the reasons that we can all learn from the concepts of minimalism, even if we don't all become minimalist. And I think with the rise of "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up" and other similar books, I think this is a growing movement, certainly, and I just found his perspective really helpful on that.

And another helpful episode, for me personally especially, was Dr. Izabella Wentz, who is a complete wealth of knowledge. She's absolutely brilliant. I've gotten to speak to her several times and she really delves into thyroid problems, especially Hashimoto's. She is by far one of the world experts on the topic. She's a pharmacist and super well researched and is helping thousands of people pretty much daily at this point. So that's a really good one if you have any kind of thyroid problems. I hope you don't, because I have been through that and it's not very fun.

So, from there I got, I think, like, hundreds of questions from you guys, and I will try to answer as many as I can, including a few controversial ones that I will at least touch on toward the end. But I'm just gonna go through some rapid fire ones. And again, I'm not a doctor, these are just my opinions and I'd actually love to
hear yours. So if you disagree, please be respectful but please let me know in the comments of the show notes and we can talk about it. Because I think respectful discussion does benefit all of us.

So I’ve got several questions, actually, about CBD and related products. So if you’re not familiar with those, those are the cannabinoids like the substances that come from marijuana but that are not THC, so they’re not psychotropic. And there’s a lot of emerging research about these, a whole lot of products popping up on the market. I think there’s some fascinating research going forward with it and I think that I've seen, at least in people I know who have tried it, CBD seems to have a much more balanced effect than medical marijuana, for instance, although there’s some interesting research surrounding that as well.

Certainly, CBD, unlike marijuana, does not have the psychotropic effects so a lot of people are using that for things like improving sleep or relaxation. It's something that there's pretty fascinating research on, just as far as stress reduction. So I have some posts in the works on that, but I actually would love to hear from you guys what specific things you want to know. And I'm also working on a few podcast guests on that note, so we'll definitely be covering that more in the future.

So there's a lot of questions about the treatment of endometriosis, and the episode I mentioned with Kelly Brogan touches on this. There's also several other podcast episodes that will be coming very soon, they're already recorded, that really delve into the women's health side, endometriosis and PCOS and similar problems, so stay tuned for those. I do think, and this is gonna be a recurring answer, that there is a huge personalization aspect to this, because what seems to work for one person won’t work for another and I think at the end of the day we all have to kind of become researchers and figure out our own solutions.

That said, some common threads that seem to be helpful for people with endometriosis are things like removing sugar and excess carbs, increasing the amount of green vegetables consumed. There are some theories that green vegetables bind with estrogen in the body and help reduce hormone-related problems like endometriosis. That said, I think there’s also sometimes some serious root causes that need to be figured out, and there are some good resources. Izabella Wentz, I mentioned, she's written about it. Dr. Kelly Brogan has some resources, you can Google those, I'll put them in the show notes as well. But more on that certainly coming soon.

Someone asked, "How long do you typically nurse before weaning? How do you go about weaning and have you ever tandem nursed?" So, loaded question, kind of. I will say, most of my kids, they are all very independent, and I actually attribute that to the fact that my husband and I both have the warrior gene, it's known as MAO-A, which makes us both very type A and driven. They call it the warrior gene because those were typically the warriors of the past, and since we both have it, all of our children by nature have it. So my babies, pretty much once they start walking, are fiercely independent and don’t want to be contained, and are not that interested in nursing anymore.

So, we’ve had walkers actually as early as 7 months but I have nursed all of them to about 18 months and they have self weaned. I haven’t actually had to wean them. And it was pretty much just one day they were not interested anymore. And I know that there are many opinions on this. Again, I’m not saying that my way is the only way or that it's the right way. And I know that there are many people who would disagree with that and say that I should have nursed longer and that there’s ways to overcome nursing strikes or baby wanting to wean that early. I will say, for all of them, I was...all but one, I was already pregnant and I was also sure my milk had changed and I was exhausted. So I did not tandem nurse and I just felt like with my thyroid and the
demands on my body that was the right answer for me at that point. So no, I've not, never tandem nursed, and my babies have self weaned. So I don't have any brilliant advice for anyone who's struggling with that, unfortunately.

Lots of inflammation-related questions, things related to under-eye bags and swollen ankles and things like that. Again, I'm not a medical doctor and I don't have any specific advice, other than back to the personalization thing. I think that there could be some nutrient deficiencies that contribute to things like under-eye bags, and I think that inflammation or mineral imbalances seem to contribute to swollen ankles. I'm really excited about a new company that is called Viome, and I have just gone through their testing. I'll be sharing my results, actually, live on Facebook when I get them as I find them out, so I might find out some crazy news. But basically what they do, they've essentially sequenced the gut in real time.

So they are looking at not just some of the, like, basic stool tests that are done, theirs is looking at all the viruses and bacteria and basically the interaction of all the things that are in our gut at any given time, and kind of how they're affecting our genes. So it's a very in-depth analysis of the gut, and I hope that tests like that are going to provide a lot more...kind of an insight into the personalization aspect of medicine that we're still trying to figure out. Certainly more on that coming soon, but you can check it out at viome.com, and I'll have that link in the show notes as well.

So, somebody asked, "Is there a clean or organic formula for babies that's not homemade?" And unfortunately not that I know of. I have heard that there are some better options than there used to be. The only one I've ever personally tried was the Weston A. Price homemade one that you can Google Wellness Mama Formula and you'll find it. And that was only for a very short time when I had to stop nursing for a week just to do some testing, and then I went back to it. So I don't have any experience with that, unfortunately. I know there seems to be a big need for that and I hope that we have better options. I don't know of them at this point.

Let's see. Lots of requests for uses for gelatin, I will put this link in the show notes. I just updated a post on this and like "when you should use it, when you should not use it, and all the ways to use it." So that will be in there. Somebody asks, "Where are you in your recovery for Hashimoto's, and do you have fears about its progression?" So, if you guys haven't heard my story you probably...maybe some of you have, so I don't wanna bore you. The short version is it took me seven years and eight doctors to finally get diagnosed with Hashimoto's and I had...at that point, I had nodules on my thyroid, my levels were all messed up and I felt absolutely horrible. I'm super grateful to say that now my levels are completely normal, so I would be considered in remission. The nodules have gone away and I am able to control it at this point with diet.

So, I'm incredibly grateful that I have been able to find the answers that I have. And a lot of them I chronicled in my interview with Izabella Wentz, also I have various thyroid posts that will include those as well. At this point, I don't have any fear about its progression, just because I feel like I figured out what's working for me. Again, I think it is so personalized and I wish I could just kind of give everyone the answers for what would work for them. But I think it's a very personalized process and I am excited for things like Viome that are gonna hopefully give us more data to figure that out more quickly. But I know how long and hard that road is and I...but I'm also very hopeful that we're gonna have much better things in the future to help us diagnose and figure it out more quickly.

A lot of questions about which one is best to consume, gelatin or collagen? Someone said, "There are 65,
which one's best? Do I still make sweetened gelatin recipes since I am now on Bright Lines Eating?" Etc. So, I do still consume gelatin and collagen, I like both of them. I use them differently. So, basically what you need to know with gelatin, if you're trying to gel something, basically if you're using gelatin as a culinary use for its gelling purposes, you're gonna use gelatin. If you just wanna add the proteins and get the proline and the glycine and the amino acids without creating jello, then you would want to use collagen. There's now even a marine collagen for people who don't consume beef or pork, which is a great option. I'll link to the one I use in the show notes but there are several options out there.

Also, really, it just depends. And as far as me personally, I am right now not consuming any kind of sugars or sweeteners including fruit juice, just because I do feel better on that especially in the summer. I seem to really feel good with that and I've been focusing just on tons of leafy green vegetables and clean proteins. I do eat fruit, I eat things in their whole natural sources and I feel great. So, I'm not doing sweetened gelatin snacks for me, but that said, I think that children typically have a much higher carbohydrate need than adults do. So, my kids, I do still make chewable vitamins for them and elderberry gummies and just, like, marshmallows and those kind of things, and they do still eat those. So those things are also on the site, you can google pretty much Wellness Mama and any topic I talk about and it should come up.

Another question was "What is the updated information on fermented cod liver oil and what is the best way to take it?" So, I know this is a very...a lot of people are asking this, and again, I don't have...I feel like the only answer, I think, there's more research that still needs to be done, I think it is still a controversial topic. Personally, I've been experimenting with the extra virgin cod liver oils like Rosita, which I don't love just because they can go rancid so easily. Of course, so can fermented cod liver oil. I think there are some potential problems with fermented cod liver oil. That said, I don't think it's as problematic as some bloggers are making it out to be, and I have still taken it.

Right now, I'm actually focusing more on just Omega-3 supplements that have DHA and EPA, as well as in the summer I take krill oil and Astaxanthin, along with vitamin K2 for sun protection and also just for my skin. So, I can link to the ones that I take, but I'm just taking an Omega-3 supplement. Especially, right now our family's on a road trip across the country just for some family time and to see some of our amazing national parks, and we don't have refrigeration a lot of the time, so I'm taking shelf stable Omega-3 supplements instead of cod liver oil at this point.

That said, I used cod liver oil, fermented cod liver oil the most when I was working on fixing several of my teeth. And I don't know that the other Omega-3s would have the completely same effect, because they don't have the other fat soluble vitamins. So I don't have any cavities to test that theory on right now, but I do think maybe if I took Omega-3 and made sure to get sunshine for vitamin D and took vitamin K and A that it could potentially have a similar effect.

So one question, "Why do most doctors treat symptoms instead of disease? As you acknowledge, the gut is usually the first source of illness in wellness." So, I 100% agree with that. I mentioned the company I'm really excited about, Viome, and they're really delving into the gut being the root cause of disease, even having the ability to epigenetically affect which genes are expressed, which, as they're cracking the code for this, this impacts autoimmune disease and allergies and cancer risk and heart disease, it is drastic.

So, I think that there is research coming on this, I think there are pioneers like the Viome and their company that are working to decode this, but I don't think the research has been there in the past. And I also wanna say
I truly do believe, in most cases, that doctors are great humans who got into it because they wanted to help people. I don't think you survive eight years of medical school and residency if you don't actually care about people on some level. So I'm not anti-doctor by any means, I have several close friends who are doctors. I think that some of them were given incomplete information, and I think unfortunately, as our society often does, we've separated nutrition from medicine.

We've separated a lot of things. When...I think there's a lot of wisdom in a holistic approach. When you can integrate all these therapies together, understand the body as a whole and understand how food's interacting with us, how our gut bacteria is interacting with us, how our environment is interacting with us. And that's a lot of my passion on Wellness Mama is sharing the information I'm finding on how these things happen, and what we can do to kind of improve the odds for ourselves and for our children. So, kind of a...there's not a great answer. I think a lot of things, especially pharmaceuticals, do just look at the symptoms, but I also think a lot of patients just want relief from the symptoms, they don't actually want the hard answer. They don't want to be told that they need to eat more vegetables and go for a walk and get more sleep, even though those things are pretty much free.

So I think there's a lot of problems, but I also think that there are a lot of really great pioneering doctors and really great researching patients who are working to change things. And I think when enough people like you guys do the research and ask the hard questions and challenge your doctors in a respectful way and get the testing and request things on your own, I think that it is gonna bring the industry up. And I think we're gonna see some amazing changes in the next 10 years as science advances, but also as patients become more educated, so that's my 2 cents on that.

And let's see, lots of questions about asthma, so I'm gonna do a podcast episode about this because I don't have any personal experience. But I do have people in my family who I love who really have struggled with asthma, and it's one of those things that's been on my list to try to figure out and decode. So I will have more answers on that soon, hopefully. I also have heard a lot of questions about 'What is your opinion of the 'What the Health' documentary?' If you guys are not familiar with this, apparently it's on Netflix right now. I did watch it and I've also looked at the research that supposedly is behind it.

And I will say this. I think documentaries are great and can be very entertaining. I don't think they should give medical advice, just like I said I'm not giving medical advice here, and I don't try to and I don't want to. I think everybody needs to do their own research. But that said, I think there are some holes in the research behind it and I think that they used a lot of emotionally charged arguments, which...and fear, which I think those really, like, take away from the science and from the perspective. So, if you watched it there's a lot of claims like meat and eggs being as dangerous as cigarettes, which, this is not a new thing, this happens every few years. A few weeks ago saturated fat was the enemy, coconut oil was gonna cause lung disease and all these other problems.

And what's really interesting, you have to really become a detective and actually go to the source and look at the study. So, for instance, the study that said coconut oil and saturated fat increase your risk of lung cancer, obviously nobody wants lung cancer, that sounds pretty serious. If you look at the study, the study was in smokers, so...also, they didn't include in the title of all these sensationalists headlines the fact that smoking, obviously, we all know, increases your risk of lung cancer. But saturated fat in a vacuum, they weren't looking at that. They were looking at "Does saturated fat increase your risk of lung cancer?"
If you're already a smoker, and there's a lot of theories here as well, but my problem with this kind of research is they didn't isolate sugar as a variable. And a lot of times when people are consuming more saturated fats, especially if they're from fast food sources, they're also consuming a lot of processed carbohydrates and sugars and additives, and that was one of the problems with...that I found in "What the Health" as well. So, they basically made the argument meat is bad and it's gonna give you cancer, and the doctor basically went in, from what I understood, he went into fast food restaurants to test for carcinogens.

Anybody listening would probably already agree that fast food is not a health food and that there may be cancer causing ingredients in fast food. This kind of comes out in the news every few weeks. So that's not anything new. What they did not do is separate the food that I would call meat, actually meat that I would recommend eating if you're gonna eat it, which is humanely raised, grass-fed, pasture-raised, organically raised meats which are...they're not the same food at all as a fast food hamburger. But again, this is when the sensationalist arguments can be made, when you lump all things together, and I think that it's a really dangerous thing but it's why we all have to look into the deeper research. And again, I hope that all of you do your own research, I'd love to hear your take on it.

But there are also some holes, like some logical holes that you could drive a truck through. For instance, I think he made the claim that there's no problem with eating sugar, that it's harmless, that it does not cause diabetes, which goes against all of the modern medical research that we have. We certainly know there are different kinds of fats, I've talked about this a lot, and the sourcing absolutely does matter. But typically, if a person has diabetes or is at risk for diabetes, they are told to reduce their carbohydrates because we understand the connection between carbohydrates and sugar and diabetes.

We also know there's been a lot of research and a lot of documentaries related to cancers and going on low sugar diets to help with cancer treatment. So I think that's a really dangerous claim that he made, and I also did not see, from looking into it, I did not see any actual science that backed up that claim. The doctor himself seemed to just be very anti-meat and anti-fat and very pro-sugar but didn't really have any science that I saw to back it up. I've talked about sugar before, there's a sugar podcast. I have a whole post about sugar. But in short I don't think we were made to eat the amount of sugar that we're eating now, and that includes sweeteners. I think there are better alternatives certainly, but I don't think we were made to eat even huge amounts of maple syrup or honey.

And I think those things need to be balanced as part of a moderate diet and should not be at the focus. Obviously I think you guys would agree. But that things like vegetables...I have yet to meet anybody who thinks you should not eat vegetables ever. So I think there are some huge holes like that. They were very pro-carbohydrate, which, back to the personalization episode. So, some people do great with carbohydrates, some people do terrible with carbohydrates. I think understanding the gut's gonna be helpful for that. I know people who have done the Viome test who found out they actually needed to consume complex carbohydrates to feed the prebiotic bacteria in their gut. But some people, especially pre-diabetics, tend to not do well with carbohydrates. So I think there's a personalization aspect there but I think it is dangerous to say that sugar and carbohydrates are perfectly harmless, because I would not agree with that at all.

The documentary also made the claim that meat and animals and their by-products are responsible for pretty much every illness, diabetes, cancer, heart disease etc. And again, they've never separated the research between the types of meat, and if you look at the profile of a grass-fed organic beef that was really raised well, it has conjugated linoleic acid and it has Omega-3s, and its profile's actually a little bit more similar to fish,
whereas...completely different than a fast food beef. So I think those have to be separated, I think it's haphazard research that has thrown all of the meat out and I think that we need to do a lot more research.

Eggs were also vilified, and what worries me about this is the whole anti-cholesterol movement that's happened over the last few decades. We need cholesterol in the body, we know that if we don't have enough of it we have hormone problems. The brain especially needs cholesterol. And we don't actually even get most of our cholesterol from diet, we get it from...our body manufactures it. So reducing dietary cholesterol is not actually going to have that big of an impact on your cholesterol levels to begin with, but also a lot of researchers like Chris Kresser point out that cholesterol in itself is not actually the problem, it's a symptom of what's going on. It's kind of a band-aid of sorts, and it's a marker for inflammation. And if you understand it, it can actually be a great clue of what's going on in your body.

So all that said, the things that I agreed with are that there are some huge problems in conventional meat and how it's made and how it's raised. And I absolutely don't support factory farming and I would not encourage people to eat meat from factory farming, I don't think it's healthy. But I don't think that we can throw out the baby with the bathwater and I think there needs to be a lot more research. I think there is a place, personally, for ethically and organically sourced meats, and a lot of farmers are creating these now. So, bottom line, I think...I know people who are vegan. I think if you wanna be vegan for an ethical or religious reason, certainly there's...obviously it's a personal choice and a time and a place for it. But I don't like sensationalist arguments that use fear to try to convince people that all meat and meat by-products are bad. And back to the personalization thing, I think that hopefully that's gonna give us a little bit more insight as we go forward and we'll know for us what works better.

Because I also know people who tried to go vegan and felt absolutely terrible because they needed the B12 and the protein in meat, and I think personalization is the key. And I also would not personally ever recommend a long-term vegan diet. I have personally done it for a few days at a time as part of different protocols, but I don't recommend it personally long-term and I wouldn't do it myself. So, long answer to a short question. Bottom line, just do your own research and if you encounter sensationalist fearmongering headlines from anybody, go to the actual sources, look at what the study says, look at what they were actually studying, and see if that's actually the conclusion that the study had. Because a lot of times, you see it in journalism a lot, they'll pull a sensationalist line from a study that's not in context, that is not actually true, kind of like the "all coconut oil will kill you," there wasn't even actually a study that was a whole another one. But just go to the source yourself, look at the data, and make your own decision there.

I got a lot of questions about sleep and back to school. I have a lot of posts on this. I'll put it in the show notes, all of them. Basically for us what's worked is creating a really good sleep environment for the kids. And I say this while we're living in an RV and we're not getting great sleep. But at home we have a really good sleep environment that is dark and cool, and we have an air filter in there for a little bit of white noise. And we also have a sleep routine and that's helped a whole lot with the kids just to have consistency, but blackout curtains have been absolutely my best friend. And I think the sleep environment's really important. So I'll put links to those posts but I think, again, it's figuring out in your own house what works for you. Those factors have really been helpful for us.

Somebody else asked, "How in the world do you manage a big family, home schooling, business and cooking real food? I would love to know your secret." So, first of all I will say I do not do every single thing I write about every single day, that would be crazy and it would not be possible. Second of all, I'm grateful to have my
parents living close by, so they come help me home school a couple days a week. And my dad was a college professor, so he teaches the subjects that I'm not good at, so I have help. That's a huge key, I think help, I couldn't do without help. And also just I am a systems person. I've always been fascinated with systems and logistics. So I've run my life based on systems, and I'm working on book number two which will come out next year. And it's gonna delve a lot more into my systems on everything from real food and cooking to scheduling to family time to how I run the household, so I'm working on all of that because I get that question quite a bit.

So now for a couple of the controversial ones, and I will try to tackle them as noncontroversially as possible. I will also say I'm not gonna go super deep into my personal decisions on these, because these are such emotional charged issues and I don't think that anything is benefited from an extreme position on them. So, I have obviously made decisions on these issues and I stand behind them and I feel like they're right for my family. But I also don't talk about them publicly very often, just because they are so emotionally charged and I feel like a lot of times the ability to be respectful and loving goes out the window. And I'm not willing to give up the love and respect I have for you guys listening and I would hope you would maintain that for me as well. And so I tend to steer clear of those emotionally charged topics also because I think at the end of the day, especially these topics are ones that families have to make on their own. Hopefully, after doing lots of research, I always encourage research, but I wouldn't want you to take my opinion or anyone's opinion at face value and just accept it as fact.

So, let's see. All right, the first one is, people asking about vaccines. "What is your stance? Do you vaccinate your own children? Why or why not?" So again, I'm not going to go into depth in what I do personally. I will say this. I think that there is a tremendous amount of anger and fear on both sides of this issue. And at the end of the day I think it comes from the fact that obviously we all love our children, we want our children to have the best start in life, to have health and to be protected from potentially very scary illnesses. Which obviously no parent wants their child to become very ill or to suffer a life altering illness, everybody agrees with that.

Like I said, I think a lot of people lose their respect and empathy for other human beings when it comes to this. And I have seen people say things online to each other that I cannot imagine they would actually say in real life, I would hope, sincerely hope that they would not say in real life, over issues like vaccines. I think that it does need to be an issue that everybody researches on their own. That said, I also think that we're looking at the wrong outcomes or the wrong red flags. So, obviously the autism debate is incredibly tied in with the vaccine debate and there's so much information on both sides. Everything from that people think that vaccines cause autism to people to claim that there's absolutely no connection at all.

So, for this I will share what I call the Bathtub Theory that I think it is maybe Dr. Tom O'Bryan that I talked to this through with originally. But basically the theory is if our bodies are like a bathtub you can put anything you want in the bathtub. Ideally, most people would put water and the drain system, the detox pathways, those are perfectly designed to handle water. But you really could put anything you want in a bathtub. So, you could put some sand, you could put rocks, you could put pharmaceuticals, you could put Kool-Aid, you could put whatever the heck you want. It doesn't matter what you put in, when you reach the top something is gonna overflow and it's gonna spill on the floor, no matter what's in it. Also, if you're putting a whole lot of junk in it, the drainage is just gonna get clogged and you're gonna have some issues with the detox pathways.

So I think of the body in that way. And when I think of the body in that way, I think that there is a time to pause and reflect on the amount of things that are being put in the body especially at a young age, and I think that this analogy also works when it comes to autism. So, personally I don't think that there is a direct one-on
one correlation between vaccines and autism, and I don't know that any researcher who really looks into it would think there is. I think that vaccines are potentially one of the things that go in the bathtub. And I think that autism is potentially one of the things that happens when the bathtub overflows.

So I think it's...you can't isolate it as a single cause because there isn't a direct correlation and no one's been able to isolate that. What I consider potentially a much more ominous thing, and partially just because I have personally gone through autoimmune disease, but I think when you go from, what is it, maybe 8 vaccines that were recommended when I was a kid to the 72, I believe, doses that happen now before kids are 6 or something like that, the vaccines are designed to stimulate the immune system. That's how they work, that's what they do, no one would disagree with that. I think when you put that many immune stimulating components into a body in that short amount of time and the whole purpose is to stimulate the immune system, I don't think you can do that in a vacuum and I think that we should do some serious research on the long-term effects of that many vaccines and autoimmune disease. Because it doesn't make sense that something designed to stimulate the immune system in such a strong way when done that much that often that young might not have some potential link to autoimmune disease.

So again, I think the questions being asked may not be the right questions. I think that there are times to pause and reflect and think about the fact that we have greatly increased the number of vaccines that our kids are getting before a certain age and ask why. I think that there are times when it's profit driven. I personally, I will say I personally don't think that things like the chicken pox vaccine, I don't personally feel comfortable with the chicken pox vaccine because I actually want my kids to get chicken pox. I got chicken pox, most of us listening probably got chicken pox as kids and we survived. In fact, I actually loved it because I got to watch TV for three days and we didn't really get to watch TV much. So...and obviously not to say everyone has a great time with the chicken pox, but chicken pox has, like, routinely been a pretty normal childhood illness that people overcome, other than people who are immunocompromised.

And I think perhaps maybe we should consider that there could be a profit motive for big companies to continually develop vaccines, because they're so routinely given, they're very strongly pushed, and do we actually need vaccines for every single one of these issues that are out there? So, again, I think as a super personalized thing. I have absolutely no desire to get into mudslinging. I respect parents' decisions when it comes to this issue and I have certainly made my own and I stand behind them. But also just for the sake of protecting my kids, I'm not going to go deep into what my decisions have been.

Let's see, another one that is super controversial, I got a lot, a whole lot of questions about is circumcision, and I have written about this actually. It's actually something I am pretty passionate about, and I will include the link in the show notes. Again, I, to preface this, I am not trying to stir any controversy, I'm not trying to make any judgement on anyone and what decision they've made on this. I just did a whole lot of research on this issue and I know a lot of men as adults who don't like the decision that was made for them as infants. So to me this is an issue of...it's two parts. First of all, is there actually a medical benefit why you would ever do it? And second of all, even if there is, is it a decision we should make for our children?

And obviously there's all the correlations connected to it, like, you know, people say, like, "Is it like piercing your daughter's ears or tattooing your baby? Like, no one would ever tattoo their baby so why would you do something super permanent to your child?" So, I will give you my take, it's just my take and my opinion. I, again, encourage you to do your own research. I have a lot of resources in my post. But basically this is a very polarizing issue and I feel it's one that is not very commonly discussed, and if it is discussed, it gets very
emotional very quickly and it shuts down. So I hope that you will hear the respect in my voice and know that everything I say I say with love and I have no judgment whatsoever.

But I feel like as moms we can discuss episiotomies or pooping while we push out a baby or any of these things. But we are often...we are afraid to talk about circumcision. So I just wanted to go through some of the research I found in case it's helpful to someone else. So, basically, in my opinion, routine infant circumcision is a cosmetic procedure. I am yet to see any actual long-term studies that are statistically valid that show that it's actually a medical procedure.

So, many doctors tell parents things like "It's gonna make the child cleaner, lower the risk of UTIs, reduce the risk of penile cancer, etc." A lot of them also say that it's not painful for the baby and that the foreskin is completely worthless. Those last two things I completely disagree with based on the scientific evidence I've seen. We obviously know that infants feel pain, they used to think that they didn't, they used to do heart surgery on babies without anesthesia because they thought they didn't feel pain. Obviously, we now know that they do, so I think it is incredibly inhumane to do circumcisions on infants without anesthesia, certainly, because they do feel pain.

But also that we now know that there is very much a purpose of the foreskin beyond just protecting the penis, but also there's a lot of sexual purpose for later on, it has a lot of nerves. There is some recent news that came out recently that I saw that circumcision might reduce the risk of HIV. I will go more into this but I think that's a statistically flawed argument if you look at the study. But basically those are kind of all the benefits that I have ever heard people kind of say as for doing circumcision on boys. So, I think it's very important to also weigh the risk. And that's the process I went through when I was pregnant my first son and I knew I was having a boy. Until that point, I just kind of figured that was something that...my husband would make that decision because I don't have a penis and it's not my problem. But I also researched everything, and after doing the research it is something that I feel very strongly about in our own life and I feel very strongly about the decision we made. I'll go into that in a little more detail but I think it's important to study the risks.

So, the American Academy of Pediatrics evaluated the risk versus benefits of circumcision. And a couple years ago they said, their task force said that they decided that the procedure should not be routinely recommended. And this was based on 40 years of studies on both circumcised and uncircumcised boys. They concluded that problems with a penis such as irritation can occur with or without circumcision. With proper care, there's no difference in hygiene between the two, that there may or may not be differences in sexual sensation in adult men although they thought there was. And while there is a small increased risk for a UTI in uncircumcised males, especially babies under a year, the risk is still less than 1%, which is less than all girls, so it's still not a huge risk. And while they thought it might provide some protection from penile cancer, since that only occurs in the foreskin, the risk of this cancer is very low in developed countries like the U.S. And actually, like the risk of circumcision, more babies have problems related to circumcision than cases of penile cancer are prevented by circumcision. So to me it always is helpful to go back to the data and look at that.

Also, I think to remove part of the body because in 60 years it may cause cancer would be akin to doing a mastectomy on infant girls to prevent breast cancer, which is a heck of a lot more prevalent than penile cancer. So I think that argument kind of falls apart there. Like I said, we now know that infants do feel pain as intensely as adults, if not more so, and that anesthesia is often not used or using correctly. So to me that is actually, like, a human rights violation to put an infant through that much pain. And also, obviously, I think you have to look at the risk versus the benefits, so most cases of penile cancer, which is the strongest case for
circumcision, most of those happen later in life. If infants feel as much pain as adult men, why not let children grow up and make their decision for themselves if they feel that they're at risk for penile cancer or they just want to be circumcised? It's easy to do later in life, especially if babies and adults both feel pain, but it can't be undone.

So that, again, to me is something that should at least be considered. So, I won't go into all the ways that circumcision are done, but the research of this actually turned my stomach and made me kind of upset. And again, I don't want it to get into the emotionally charged side, I'm not passing judgment anyone for whatever decision they've made. I just think that this is an issue that we should potentially consider when you look at the fact that we are the only country in the world, in the United States if you're listening in the U.S., that does routine circumcision of infant boys for essentially cosmetic reasons. We don't have religious reasons, we're the only non-Jewish and non-Muslim country that does this routinely. Where my family's from, and where my husband's family is from in Europe, it's not common at all, and I don't think that we actually have data to back it up as a routine practice.

So, at the same time, if you research the foreskin, because you would think, "Well, it has no purpose," and, you know, a lot of people want their sons to look like their dads. But really, it does, from a biological perspective, the foreskin serves a lot of purposes. So for one, it's good for protection, kind of as an eyelid for that part of the body. So the eyelids protect the eyes, the foreskin protects the glans and keeps it sensitive and moist and serves a lot of other purposes related to pH balance and cleanliness. So, actually, from a bacterial perspective, just like there's a vaginal microbiome the penis has one too, and removing the foreskin alters this. So, we're just starting to learn this. In the same way, like, that's obviously in the line of immunological defense, and we're just now learning about all of this.

So, there's a whole lot of other, like, sexual related functions related to the foreskin as well. All that research is in the post that I mentioned. But that's kind of my short version of my take on it. You can read a lot more in the post, and there's some really fascinating history related to it if you're a history buff like I am. But I would really recommend that you check it out. There's a whole lot of statistics in the post as well. But it was helpful for me to know because it seems that circumcision's a very common practice in the U.S. And if you look at the data worldwide, only about 20 out of every 1,000 males are circumcised, and 18 of those 20 are in the U.S. alone. So we think it's normal and common but it's actually not on the world perspective. Any time I see data like that I just always step back and ask, "Why? Is there a profit motive? Is there an underlying other motive that no one's picking up on?"

Because I've heard parents who circumcised their sons just because they said they didn't want him to be an outcast in the locker room. But also, look at the data. Circumcision rates have fallen from 56% to 32% in the last four years alone. So the majority of boys are not circumcised now. So if the cosmetic alone is the reason I think maybe it's worth a second look, especially when there's data on both sides like this. So, again, also circumcision is often done, I hear a lot of parents, to reduce the risk of problems like penile cancer. And if you look at the data from that, only about 300 men die each year from penile cancer, and over 500 babies die as complications related to circumcision.

So in the U.S. alone, about 117 to 120 boys die each year as a result of complication of circumcision like infection or blood loss. So, statistically to me, just with the research background, that is not a statistically valid reason that you would want to consider this procedure, because the benefits don't in fact outweigh the risk. I just encourage everyone to do the research and I'd also say, if you're considering this for your child, I would
say do the research certainly, and also maybe talk to someone who...on both sides, especially someone who was circumcised as a child and wishes they had not been.

Because, like I said, it's not reversible, and my take is that that's a decision I'm gonna leave up to my children and I'm not gonna make it for them, just like I wouldn't give them a tattoo or anything else permanent. So that's kind of the decision I made. Again, I hope that you hear the respect and love in my voice. I'm not trying to be judgmental, that's just my research and how I made my decision. But I do feel that it is a human rights issue in some ways, especially the way it's done and all the problems that can be related to it. So I just really encourage you check out the link in the show notes, there's a whole lot of links about it and more research. And you can see all the studies that I mentioned and where I got my research, and I'd love to hear your respectful and kind opinions in the comments even if you disagree. Because I think it's something that doesn't to be talked about, because it's happening and kind of record amounts. Yeah, so that's my take.

And, let's see, that is the majority of the questions I got. If you guys like the question and answer episode like this, I'm happy to do more of them later on. This is actually kind of fun to read all of your questions, and I appreciate all of your kind words about the podcast. And I appreciate all of you so much for listening. And, yeah, I would just love to hear any future podcast episodes that you would like me to talk about, anyone you'd like me to interview. Just share your thoughts in the show notes or respond to any of my emails and I'll get that, and I would love to hear your take.

But again, thank you so much for your time. I know as moms, especially, any moms listening, that time is our most valuable and most limited resource. And it means a lot that you would take time to hang out with me, and I love hearing from you guys. Thanks for hanging in there for 100 episodes, and I look forward to the next 100, and let me know who you want to hear from. And I will talk to you next time on the Healthy Moms podcast.

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