



**EPISODE 802**

# **Why Childhood Illnesses Are Skyrocketing & How to Raise Healthy Kids in Our Modern World**

**With Guest Dr. Joel Gator**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Welcome to the Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert, Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today. Since 1980, the obesity prevalence among children in the United States has almost tripled. Today, nearly one in every three of our kids is classified as overweight or obese. And not only do we have an epidemic with rising rates of obesity in our children. We're seeing skyrocketing rates of issues like autism, of neurological conditions, of autoimmune conditions. Something is seriously awry. And today we're going to talk about, is it just because of better testing?

We're going to talk to a leading pediatrician and get some insight on this who's seeing these issues firsthand. And also he's working alongside with parents to be able to really understand what's at the root cause of these epidemics and what can we do to improve the health outcomes for our children and also for ourselves as well. Now I've got something for you to consider during this episode as well, which is if you grew up, like I did, I'm a kid of the eighties. I grew up in the eighties. All right. So this is like the golden age of ultra processed food. This is when things got taken up a few thousand notches. All right. Not only do we have ultra processed food, but now we've got branded foods. All right. So I didn't just want the ultra processed cereal. Now I got Mr. T's cereal or the Smurfs cereal. All right, the Ghostbusters cereal. So these branded things, so it just integrated into my tiny little childhood psychology even deeper. All right. Now, alongside these rising rates of obesity in our children, we've seen skyrocketing rates of ultra processed food consumption.

So we know that there's a huge correlation here. We're not talking about causation, but it just so happens that, and this is a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, they tracked the consumption of ultra processed food by our children for about 20 years. In 1999, the average child in the United States was eating about 60 percent ultra processed foods. So these are newly invented food products. And by 2018, that number had reached almost 70 percent of our children's diet is now made of newly invented ultra processed foods. And so we know that these foods contain newly invented compounds that are categorized as carcinogens, categorized as obesogens. So these are obesity causing agents.

They alter our metabolism in a way that causes the body to gain and store weight and to be resistant to weight loss. Outside of the context of conventional thinking around diet and exercise, although those things absolutely matter. But what happens when we are consuming things every day that alters our metabolism and making it more difficult, and so we know that food matters.

And when I was a kid, my grandparents, we're getting marketed to because this is where I was getting my plug. All right. When I'm getting what I'm about to share with you, they were marketed to, Hey, you want to make sure that you're getting all the things that your child needs.

All they got to do is take a Flintstone vitamin. All right. Check all those boxes off. Let your kid go ahead, have those chicken McNuggets and the McDonald's happy meal. But this Flintstone vitamin is going to ensure your kids getting everything they need. And so that's what I had every day. All right. And sometimes I might get two, all right. Those some plants thought vitamins were fire. It actually tastes amazing. It was just candy. All right. But today we know that number one, not only are these nutrients synthetic versions of these nutrients that are found in these so called multivitamins, right? And we know, There are several studies on this and I actually talked about this in my most recent Cookbook, the e smarter family cookbook, looking at data peer reviewed studies on synthetic versions of nutrients versus real food or whole food concentrates that you can get in supplement form Versions of these nutrients that are coming from real food Huge difference in the bioavailability in your body actually using the food based nutrients, right?

So not only are they synthetic but also they're just absolutely inundated with sugar and all these artificial ingredients. That's what made him taste so good. Today, we've got far better choices. And if you want to ensure that your family, number one, of course, having nutrition for our kids that is largely based on real food. If we just do that, you're winning. You're already in a different stratosphere. But also if you want to check those extra boxes and make sure that your kids are getting a healthy dose because the truth is as well, you know a lot of our food even if you're eating whole real foods. The micronutrient deficiencies are there because it's deficient in the soil, right?

So you could just say, you know what, instead of eating one carrot, just eat two, right? But then we start to get into this numbers game of trying to eat a lot of food where well we have access to today, which is cool, because yes, we're dealing with a very complicated terrain. But it's also never been easier to get in great nutrition if we know where to look. And so for my kids, for my family, for many years to ensure that we're checking those micronutrient boxes. We're utilizing whole food concentrates in the form of these incredible organic superfood blends from Organifi. Whether it's the red juice blend, whether it's the green juice blend, that has highlights of things like spirulina and chlorella that have been utilized for thousands of years. Spirulina is the most protein dense food ever discovered. It's been utilized by civilizations for thousands of years, whether it's from the country, Chad in Africa to the Aztecs, right? This has been utilized as a protein source for thousands of years, but it's about 70 percent protein by weight, but it doesn't weigh a lot.

So this doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be your highest protein source, but these proteins are incredibly bioavailable. But what's special about it is those micronutrients, things like compounds called phycoyanin, for example, that are rare in the world. In foods, right? So these pigments have been found to actually stimulate something called stem cell genesis. This is the creation, the production, and mobilization of stem cells.

And what are stem cells do for us? They become anything that our body needs to regenerate. All right. Very powerful stuff. Not to mention the incredible bioavailable amounts of things like magnesium, things like chromium, things like B vitamins. The list goes on and on. We can get these from real superfood concentrates and they actually taste good. And I don't know if you know this or not, if you've been utilizing Organifi for a while, or if you've yet to try them, they actually have a brand new blend just for the kiddos. Organifi Kids Easy Greens. All right, so they really focused on something that kids enjoy, that has the micronutrients that our kids growing bodies need to thrive.

But again, this does not negate the need for real food. This does not negate the need for movement for high quality sleep. All these things matter. But if you're going to add something in to check those nutritional boxes just to be sure real health insurance check out organifi kids easy greens or the organifi green juice blend, the original. All right, and of course the organifi red juice as well. I'm a fan of all these we have them on our shelves at all times at our house. Head over to [organifi.com/model](https://organifi.com/model) And you're going to get 20 percent off everything, all right, 20 percent off storewide. That's [Organifi.com/model](https://organifi.com/model), [O R G A N I F I .com/model](https://organifi.com/model), 20 percent off, hook yourself up, hook your family up. Head over there. Check them out. [Organifi.com/model](https://organifi.com/model). And now let's get to the Apple podcast review of the week.

**ITUNES REVIEW:** Another five star review titled "wonderful podcast" by Joey Fry Vogel. I love the diversity of information backed by science with easily applicable strategies and testimonies we can all understand and use in our own lives right now. Thank you to Shawn and the team and guests.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Amazing. You just hit the nail on the head. You described us in a nutshell. Thank you so much for taking the time to share that over on Apple Podcasts. And listen, if you have to do pop over to Apple Podcasts. Leave a review for the Model Health Show. Let people know what it is that we out here. All right. I appreciate you so much. And without further ado, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day. Dr. Joel Gator Warsh is a board certified pediatrician. An author of parenting at your child's pace. He's well known for his popular social media page at Dr. Joel Gator where he offers weekly parenting and integrative pediatric support. Dr. Gator has also published research in several peer reviewed journals on topics regarding childhood injuries, obesity, and physical activity.

And he's been featured in numerous documentaries, films, health summits, and major media outlets like Forbes, Parents, The Washington Post, the list goes on and on. And now he's here to share his insights with all of us. Let's dive in this conversation with the incredible Dr. Joel Gator.

All right, we're here with the incredible Dr. Joel Gator and as a pediatrician, you've seen firsthand the skyrocketing rates of issues with our children. And you said that our modern lifestyle is a disaster for pediatric health. Why is that?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** I think so. I think that, I mean, first of all, just look at the statistics, right? We're seeing about 40-50 percent of kids with a chronic disease, more than that with adults, and so we really need to get back to basics. I mean, if we're moving in the wrong direction, if life expectancy is going down, then that means that we're doing something wrong, and that's our modern lifestyle.

We used to live till we were 40. So there are some things that we're doing better, right? I mean, we're better at infectious disease. We have better sanitation, but what we are seeing now is chronic diseases, debilitating illnesses that we're dealing with everyday, like eczema, allergies, autoimmune conditions, and medicine was never really set up for this. And so we are, I think, going in the absolute wrong direction and we need to refocus back on our health so we can move in a better direction.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Now, you've, again, seen this firsthand and there are some people who are contrarians. They're just like, well, rates of childhood issues, disabilities, diseases, they're not really going up that much. It's just, better testing, that kind of thing. What do you have to say to those folks?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Yeah, that makes me so frustrated as a pediatrician and a parent, because you can look around and, even in just our lifetime, you can remember back to when you were a kid and we just didn't see the disease rates and the things that we're seeing now. So it's really frustrating. Yes, we're better at diagnosis. That's absolutely true. But there's no way that's the whole picture. And it's so frustrating to me that's what we're saying, because it's kind of putting the responsibility off of us and saying, Oh, we're just better at diagnosing.

It's just genetics. It's just the way that it is. And that takes away the ownership from the parents. It takes the ownership away from society that there's something that we might be doing. And I understand that we don't want to blame anybody. We don't want a parent to feel like they caused a chronic disease for their child. But at the same time if we're not mindful of what we're doing and we don't take ownership and start to figure out exactly what's going on,

then we're never going to change anything. And then every kid's going to have a chronic disease and you know As a parent, if I have two children, I don't want one of those two kids to have a chronic disease. But that's what's happening today. Like that's what we're seeing. And it shouldn't be that way. And it wasn't that way 20, 50 years ago. It was like 5, 10 percent of just a few years ago. So it is something that we're doing or probably many things that we're doing and if we begin to take ownership of the things that we do have some control over, then I am sure that we can move things in a better direction and families see that all the time.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. And you, this is one of the things that is really sobering for us as parents that you shared is that we're inching towards about 50 percent of our kids now having some form of a chronic illness. And this is like, this isn't just like 10 percent more, this is like significantly higher rates than it used to be. Like you said, five, 10 percent back in the day. And specifically been sharing statistics on much higher rates of things like autism, autoimmune conditions. Really the list goes on and on. There's been an explosion in obesity rates. Can you talk a little bit about, again, mentioning that our modern lifestyle is a disaster for pediatrics. What is it about our lifestyle in particular with things like allergies and eczema and asthma and other autoimmune conditions? What's causing these higher rates?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Well, I think to start with, the most frustrating thing is that we don't know, right? We don't know. We're not putting this as serious priority and we're not studying this to the level that I think we need to be because we're not identifying it as that issue. We're saying it's a better testing. It's genetics. It's just the way that it is. So we don't have the perfect framework. We don't have a full understanding of the picture, but I think personally the big contributing factors are poor diets so we're not getting the nutrients that we need and then we're also getting too many chemicals.

So we're surrounded by chemicals. There's chemicals in our food. We're just being bathed in a soup of chemicals and we're not getting the nutrients that we need. How do we expect our kids to grow up and function optimally? Their immune systems are not functioning optimally. Getting to a point where they're so inflamed that it turns into a chronic disease. And again, when we say, Oh, it's just genetics. The way that it is, we're just better at diagnosis. It's not true because there's so many kids that come into integrative practitioners and you work on their diet, you improve their exercise, you improve their sleep, you clean up their home environment with, and get rid of the toxins, and they get better. They lose the diagnosis. I've worked with many practitioners that a child has an autism diagnosis, and they lose that diagnosis five years later. They have an autoimmune condition, they go back to their doctor and the numbers all look normal the doctor says, well, what did you do?

How is this possible? And it's because they change up their lifestyle. Now, does that mean that there aren't any genetic components? No, of course there are some things. You could do everything in the world and you're still gonna have that condition, but you can still improve your life. And I think about it like diabetes. It's the perfect example.

We have type 1 and type 2 diabetes. And with type 2 diabetes, we know that if you improve your lifestyle, Things can get better, right? If you improve, you increase your exercise, you eat a little bit better, then a lot of individuals will lose their diagnosis and get back to a better place, but not necessarily as much with type 1. Certainly you can improve things, but it's a genetic component. I think a lot of autoimmune conditions are like that, and even autism. I think that the, it's a diagnosis based on symptoms, and so I think it's a lot of things. And for a certain portion of the population, a certain portion of individuals with autism or autoimmune conditions.

There is so much that we can do and so much that we have done that's given us this diagnosis, but that means that there is a power that we have to make a change. And if we don't say that we have some power, if we just kind of push it off and say it's better diagnosis, then not going to help those kids and, it definitely get into discussions and anytime we talk about autism, it gets heated, right? Certainly does. And if you mention this, then people get upset, but there are around 40 percent of kids with autism now that are nonverbal. We would not have missed that 50 years ago, right? Where are those diagnoses? So sure, there's such a wide range when you're talking about autism and symptoms and, There are so many families that are struggling, so many kids that are struggling in their own bodies and if there is something that we can do to help those kids, then why would we not want to explore that?

It's not to shame anybody, it's not to say that we don't love these kids or we shouldn't treat them amazingly and, but it's why are we not trying to help these families that need the help? If you don't want it, that's okay, that's totally fine, but there are so many families that do and there's a lot that we can do.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Yeah. I think just having more education and more examples of what's possible, like you just mentioned, being able to put these conditions that are becoming, again, they've gone up precipitously into remission. Those stories getting highlighted, whereas what we're really inundated with are more stories on how it's just getting worse and worse, and there's nothing you can do about it. Right. Right. And so just being able to reframe this to know that, and I love that you said this as well, Just about any of these conditions can be improved, right? We're not just talking about complete remission. We're just talking about people getting better. And what are some of those factors for us to actually stack conditions in our kids favor?

A big part of this. And also just being able to spend time with you to read your book and just to spend time in your world is removing the cause, like removing some of the glaring issues. Like again, you start off by saying, we don't know exactly what it is with all these things. Right? We know that the environment itself has changed dramatically and there are multiple things in our environment that are stacking conditions in particular against our kids and so one of those that you highlighted just and by the way, everybody should be following you on social media, too, and One of the things you highlighted recently is the impact that a high sugar diet has on the developing brain Let's talk a little bit about that.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Yeah, I mean if you look at the data on sugar and We eat more sugar in some meals than we should be eating in the whole week. We eat more sugar in the first few years than adults ate their whole life, even 20, 30, 50 years ago. And that's not to say that we can't have any natural sugars, but we're having so much artificial sugar and it's added to everything. And I can just speak as a parent, right? I can speak to seeing my own child. Well, I have two, two kids now, but the older one has been, old enough to actually see this and they go, he goes to a party, he eats one piece of cake and he's a different kid because we don't, Eat that at home.

We don't add any sugar except for natural sugars to anything that he's had. He's four years old and he never really had it. He doesn't eat any of those processed foods, but if he does eat a little bit, he's a completely different kid and I've always thought this my whole life. But then you actually see it in your own child. You see the difference from just one meal at a birthday party or something like that, then what is going on in the other kids' brains that eat this food all of the time? And how much of that is, when we talk about ADHD or we talk about behavioral issues, how much of that is actually just from the diet, that if you clean that up, you would see a huge difference?

It's not to say, again, that there is an ADHD or their medications can't be useful sometime, but how much of it is actually controllable just from changing our diet and just from adjusting our lifestyles that we can see a huge difference and I'm an integrated pediatrician and to me what that means is Balancing the best of modern Western medicine with alternative practices. I'm not against Western medicine at all. And sometimes when we talk about integrative, it's woo it's out there. And there can be some people that do that. But why does there have to be two sides, right? Why does there have to be modern medicine and alternative medicine? Why can't we just do whatever's best on the day for our kids?

And why would we not want to decrease in medication if we can do that? It doesn't mean we shouldn't ever prescribe it, right? Sometimes an antibiotic can save your life. Sometimes the child does need a medication to function optimally, but if we can adjust their diet or remove



some toxins and that decreases their medication, that gets them off their medication, that gets rid of their diagnosis.

Why would we not try that? There's no downside to that and it's like it's these two sides fighting back and forth that are really on the same team. I mean, aren't we all on the same team? Don't we just want healthy kids? And yes, we have some different opinions maybe on how we get there, but at the end of the day we want the same thing. We're all on the same team, right? And medicine, it seems like has moved into this world of telling people what to do, which is so frustrating, again, because we're on the same team and we're trying to help people to get to a better place. And doctor comes from the word docer, meaning to teach, right, in Latin. And that's what medicine always was, but it seems these days like we're just telling people what to do instead of coming together and creating a plan that works the best for the family, right? And that's one of the impetuses for the book, too. It's like everybody's different. Every situation is different, and we need to look at all the evidence. Figure out what makes sense for that family and help them to get to a better place. But not to tell them what to do, it's just to teach them what's out there and let the parents, the family decide what's best for their kid.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right, right. That's another one of the most empowering things about your work and about the book is you keep bringing us back to this important fact, which is we as parents are the most important people in our child's health. We are the ones who are primarily responsible for our child's health. But we have a system that has been created. In our culture that is caused us to really outsource a lot of things. And the system itself is Really medical eyes a lot of symptoms that we start to lose our own parental inquiry about like what can be causing this and also our practitioners same thing just having a little bit more inquiry instead of just treating symptoms and targeting symptoms. But your work is really about removing root causes and also yes, whenever we have an acute situation and medicine is there to help with those symptoms as well.

We can have both and that's really the great thing about this is that it's a both end world, but most importantly it has to be empowering for us as parents. We have to take that responsibility because we have the responsibility to pay attention to our child's uniqueness. And understand there isn't any cookie cutter way to parent and to care for our child's health. And you're giving us some of these tools and just staying on this topic of sugar, for example, if parents are wanting to do a little bit better because it's a tricky landscape, we grew up just we grew up in a sugar culture. All right, we grew up in a very just kind of inundated with a lot of sugary products, you know. It was not uncommon for me to wake up and to have a bowl of Lucky Charms or the off brand kind of cereal so instead of Lucky Charms, it would be like fortunate rabbit's foot or something like that.

I was just making that name up, but it'd be like an off brand kind of, and for lunch having a pizza, a slice of pizza, with the juice. And then for dinner, having some macaroni and cheese and fish sticks and maybe some canned green beans thrown in the mix, right? So this would be a normal day of eating for me. Not to mention, the chips and the cakes.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Sure, me too.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And the cookies and my drink of choice. My beverage of choice was like juice, right? "juice", which had 0 percent juice, by the way.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** 100 percent sugar.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, 100 percent sugar, right? And so if parents are wanting to make some shifts in how much sugar their kids are eating, and here's my question for you because parents are like, but my kid wants it though. My kid wants it. What do you say to help coach that parent?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** I totally get that and I say to parents that it's our job to be the parents and sugar is addictive and it's not something that we need in the levels that we're eating. And it's certainly not in the added sugars that we're getting and the processed sugars that we're getting. So at some point, we just have to take charge of our family's health and we have to make decisions that are best for their long term health. And so I tell people if in my office, blame me. It's fine. If that's what you want to do, but I think at the end of the day, the number one thing that people can do is just start to read labels and it doesn't mean that You have to never give them a piece of cake.

It doesn't mean that you have to go from a bag of chips to broccoli, and that's going to be the only thing you're going to feed your kids, but every parent can start to become savvy at reading labels, and if you take ownership when you go to the store, and you purchase things that you're going to turn over that bag, and you're going to read the label, I mean, hopefully you pick some things that don't have labels, but for the most part, if we're talking about. And say a bag of chips is going to have a label and pick the things with ingredients that you actually know what they are. If it's a long chemical name, it's probably not good for you. You don't need a PhD in chemistry to know that some word, long word on a label is probably not that good for you. And if they have, 10 grams of sugar is not as good as, five grams of sugar where you can look at that and kind of compare the two and it doesn't have to be more expensive. Sometimes it is but it doesn't have to be. And you can pick the better version and if you do that for every single purchase over the next five ten fifteen years, it add it adds up.

It makes a huge difference and it's the small little decisions that we make that add up that we're just not focused on these days because we're so focused on convenience. We're so focused on money and, buying things that are cheaper and I get that. I mean, I understand that we want to do what we need to do and we have to do what we need to do. But at the same time, if we look at our health, 50 percent of kids have a chronic disease. So if you're okay with that, then you keep living the same way that we are in America and Western culture right now. But if you want to have healthy kids, then you have to look at the stats and they are what they are.

That's not doom and gloom. That's not me trying to scare people It's just saying this is what it is and I want you to be healthy. And if you want to be healthy, then there are some things that you're going to have to do differently than what we're doing these days or you're going to be one of those statistics and that's just is what it is. And it's very frustrating as a doctor that we're not pushing the conversation back towards health and to the very little things that parents can do because it matters. And there was a great study out of Harvard where they were looking at soup. I don't know if you know like the cans of soup study, but they took canned soup and they were looking at BPA levels in these patients they give them five days of canned soup five days of homemade soup. And looked at the bpa levels in their urine because in the lining of the cans there's a bpa. And it was a thousand percent difference after five days. And I love that study because it's such a simple little study, but at the same time we're like five days cans of soup versus homemade soup. Thousand percent difference BPA like what does that mean for every single decision that we're making? It's you don't think about it, but you just making a few more meals. Yeah, it adds up.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, I love that. By the way that study I cited that study in my previous book and eat smarter and why does this matter? Well, we'll put these studies up for everybody to see Right now we've got Solid data. This just came out this year finding these, BPA, these plasticizer chemicals in particular, those that come from things like plastic water bottles and food products showing up in human hearts, like half of the patients who were tested had it in their carotid artery plaque. Showing up in human testicles, right? And so again..

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** All of them.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Every testicle had plastics in them. Okay. Like, it's integrating itself into our tissue. Also, another study found that it's integrating itself into skin and leading to higher rates of skin cancer, like, we started this off and my question was about our environment and how this environment is really cultivating very complicated terrain for our children. In particular, because they're growing up in this at such a high level.

And so here's the directive that you shared for everybody. Not just yeah, let's pay attention to those labels and let's do better to avoid added sugars, right? We're not villainizing all sugar like certain foods are gonna have sugar in it naturally occurring. A little bit of added sugar is we don't want to beat ourselves up about and from time to time kids go to birthday parties all this stuff. But let's do our best to avoid added sugars and this was a revolutionary idea that you said which this is might sound crazy. Let's eat more stuff that doesn't have a label on it. All right, my son is here by the way. My 12 year old Brayden who just finished sixth grade, his last day of sixth grade yesterday. We got into the car and he said take your kid to work day Right B. What do we have last night?

**Brayden:** A sweet potato casserole from the cookbook, our family cookbook

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Sweet potato casserole from our family cookbook. Now with that most of those ingredients don't have labels, right? It's all just real food ingredients Whereas I grew up if I was trying to get that kind of experience, it's a sweet potato enchilada. Let's be clear, enchilada casserole is very pizza and enchilada esque. I'm eating family can of spaghettios All right, true story, or we're ordering pizza. And It's so crazy like I'm not exaggerating at all like I still remember the phone number from the piece of place by our house like it's stuck in my head

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Not anymore though. No phone numbers anymore, right?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. Oh my gosh. I can't even imagine But, we can have these incredible food experiences because, I mean, my man tore it up. All right. We're big foodies. We love food and being able to have these delicious foods. And we made a big batch. So we just package it up. We actually it was leftovers that we had yesterday because we had the night before and this gets our family together, you know we sat down and ate together as well. And we get more involved in this process of preparing food and we can make it easier by preparing You know in batches and things like that. This is not to say we don't door dash. All right, but it's just like ..

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** How much? How often?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Exactly.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** And can we not aim to? Encourage people to cook more. I mean you're a foodie. It tastes better when you make it. It tastes better when it's fresh. If you pick something off a plant and you eat it, I mean, I challenge anybody. Go out to a farm, pick a tomato off of a plant. Pick a grapefruit off of a plant, eat anything off of a tree, a plant. It is 10

times better if you eat it right then. You cannot get the same food that is packaged in a store that you can get when it's fresh. And that's usually the best case scenario for us is just cooking the food from the source. But even then, if you go and you pick a berry off of a bush, how long does it last for? It lasts for like, two, three, maybe four or five days. So what is being sprayed on all of our food even in the best case scenario when it's shipped from another country? You know goes in a boat or you know on a train or whatever gets here in the truck. Then it sits in the warehouse, then it goes to a store, then it sits in the store, then you pick it up then you eat it.

That's not three or four days. So something's happening, something's being sprayed on basically everything that we eat to preserve it, and so these chemicals just keep adding up. But if you're not even eating that if you're eating the pre packaged food that has all the stuff Sprayed in there and put in there and to keep it as a preservative then how do we expect to be healthy? How do we expect our kids to be healthy? If that's what they're eating every single day and they're not eating the best case scenario food. They're eating the food that's packaged sugars, dyes, and chemicals. Things that are not allowed in other countries, that we're just eating every single day, and then we wonder why we have a 50 percent chronic disease rate, we wonder why obesity is going up. It's not rocket science to me that there is a huge portion of it. That's very controllable and going back to what you said. It's the family the parents that have to take control. The medical system is not going to do it medical system is very slow to change and medicine is fantastic at identifying things that are serious conditions, but it's not set up and it has never been set up for chronic disease.

And there just isn't the time in most medical offices to spend 30 minutes talking about your nutrition, spend 20 minutes talking about the toxins, dive into all of these things. You're going to spend three to five minutes with the doctor. There's no bad pediatricians out there, right? These are people that went into medicine to help kids, but there is a system that we're working in that's not set up for chronic disease and not set up to look at root cause and not set up to talk about what we're eating. And so okay, here's a medicine, here's a pill. It does make you feel better in the short term, but it solves nothing. It solves nothing. It doesn't mean that a medicine can't help you and sometimes we need it. But that's not the reason that so many kids are sick. They don't have a deficiency of a medicine. They have a deficiency of nutrients and vitamins and too many toxins and if we're finding You know, BPA in everybody's testicles.

Well, what about the other 10, 000 chemicals that are out there and how much of those are in our bodies? And then what do we expect to happen when we're filled with all these chemicals? So if we're not doing everything we can to minimize that, then we're going to see the results that we're seeing.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, absolutely. Got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back.

Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, stated that all disease begins in the gut. We often think of this in terms of chronic diseases, but this holds true for infectious diseases as well. He had a plethora of nutritional treatments for his patients. And according to a study cited in the journal *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, one of his most notable treatments for preventing infections was propolis. Propolis is time tested immune support from the world of bees. And today, numerous peer reviewed studies are affirming its benefits. One study published in the peer reviewed journal, *Antiviral Chemistry and Chemotherapy*, revealed that propolis has significant antiviral effects, specifically in reducing blood viral lung infections. Now, a little fun fact is that Hippocrates used propolis both internally and externally for his patients.

And again, today, the external benefits are being highlighted in new studies as well. This study published in *Phytotherapy Research* found that topical propolis that was applied a few times a day. It was three times a day in this study. Accelerated the healing of cold sores faster than the placebo group. The researchers found that topical propolis not only reduced the amount of herpes virus present in a person's body, but it also protected the body against future cold sore outbreaks. One other study, and again, there's so many. This is a meta analysis of multiple studies. Published in the *Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. And they found that propolis has antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, and anti tumor properties. It is well noted to be an immunomodulator that increases the body's resistance to infection.

This is one of the most supportive things that you can do for your immune system. And it's one of my favorite go tos that I use on a regular basis. And I'm talking about the propolis immune spray. From [beekeepers naturals, go to beekeepers naturals. com forward slash model](http://beekeepersnaturals.com). And you're going to get 20 percent off their propolis immune spray and also store wide on their other incredible bee products, including their superfood honey and their Royal jelly supplement. That is incredible for our cognitive function. Go to [B E K E P E R SNaturals.com/model](http://BEKEPERSNaturals.com/model) for 20 percent off. Get yourself hooked up right now with their incredible propolis immune spray. It is something that I always have on hand. I travel with it. It's actually in my bag right now, but whenever I'm traveling and on the road and also just keeping my family healthy proactively, especially during cold and flu season, hop over there, check him out. [Bekeepersnaturals.com/model](http://Bekeepersnaturals.com/model) for 20 percent off. And now back to the show.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Well, I want to ask you about a subject matter. There's this label that's put on to our kids, picky eater, all right.

Because if parents are wanting to make some changes with their kids, what you're really alluding to is that it's probably a little easier to not introduce these foods, especially early on in the first place, I would imagine. But if we're in, by the way, this is coming from a card carrying member of Picky Eater Club, all right? Like, if you looked that up in the dictionary back in the 80s, I was right there, with like, some fish sticks, right? And when we're dealing with a child who's a picky eater, how do we help to get those nutrients into our kids bodies? How do we help to possibly reduce the ultra processed foods that our kids are? It seemed to be only things that they want to eat.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Yeah, that's a great question. I think you got to break it down a little bit because there are certainly some kids with conditions to which it was going to be much more difficult to work with them. And we'll put that in a different category for now. But I think in general we're talking about picky eaters. It's the kids that just don't want to eat more snacks, want to eat more of the white foods like gluten, dairy, lots of pasta. Those kinds of things, lots of sugar. And it starts with what you said. So first things first if your kid is young or you're just having a child right now, then, The first thing is we just don't introduce them to a lot of that food until you have to.

Once they go to school, it's a little harder because there are other kids around, they're going to eat it. But you're buying all the food for them in those first few years. So if you don't introduce them to any of that food at home, they don't even know about it. And then you're not going to have to deal with that for a while. But it's harder when they get older because if they're used to it, then you kind of have to break those habits. And one of the big things is modeling yourself, right? I mean, we can't expect a kid not to eat an Oreo if you're eating it, so you realistically have to not purchase those foods anymore, not to have them in the home if you want to make those changes. And you start making small changes. You don't have to go from massively sugary foods and a lot of packages right to broccoli. You kind of transition it slowly. You start to decrease some of those foods that are available, and you will see that As you introduce kids to healthier and more nutritious foods, they will eat it in general.

Sometimes it takes some time, but if you keep introducing things and most kids do transition and we just, we have to walk the walk. Do it with them and continue to kind of explain to them and teach them about health and wellness. And most kids do get it over time. They definitely do. And you do see that when we start to teach kids about food and we start to eat healthier, then at first it can be a big battle for a couple of weeks, especially because most people are addicted to sugar. We're addicted to this food and so it's not the easiest thing to break. But once you get past that, then you realize that a lot of this food is actually pretty tasty and you like it. And then the other big part is portion of it is being a little bit humble as parents that maybe we're not the best cooks, right?

I think that's a big part of it. A lot of parents grew up in a time where TV dinners were normal and fast food was normal. And marketing was a big part of eating and so we kind of transitioned away from cooking to being, having food made for us. And we, a lot of us never really learned how to cook that much or just don't do it as much these days. And so if that is the case for you, then maybe when you take a cooking class, maybe we need to learn, I think that is a little, you need a little bit of humility there in terms of your cooking, because I've seen it so many times where broccoli is not just broccoli, or it depends how you cook it, you can give a kid one kind of broccoli and it's going to be terrible.

And then you make it a different way and they love it. A great example was my dad came to visit and he's not necessarily the healthiest eater. But he we had these kale chips from Erewhon and I don't know if you've ever had them, but they're super good. And he ate them.

He's like, Whoa, if we had this in Canada, then I would eat this all the time. Right. And it's not because of the kale chips, it tasted good, right? It was the way that it was prepared. And so there are ways that you can take foods and work with food that you want them to have but prepared in a way that they like it. We're not trying to deprive them of enjoying food. We're trying to create food that's healthier that they love because that's what's going to sustain. That's what's going to work in the long term. It's not Forcing your kid to eat steamed broccoli. It's teaching them to love fresh produce. Teaching them to love cooking. And that It gets back to the family, right?

It gets back to spending time together, cooking together, learning about food. Kids are much more likely to eat it if they help you pick it, if they help you prepare it. They love doing it. They absolutely do. I mean, our four year old helps us all the time with food. We have a garden in our home and we pick food and he loves it. We go to the farmer's market. He helps pick out food. Your kid might not love apples, but have they been in the farmer's market and tried 15 different apples? Cause maybe there's one that they like and then you can get that in their diet.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome. Awesome. And also we can make this into experiences, going apple picking, for example, thank you for adding that adventure piece in that, like, participating in the process piece, because what you're saying is that this is going to require us to change and that's really the bottom line and it can rub us the wrong way sometimes because.. Again, unfortunately, we've outsourced so much of raising our kids to other things, whether it's the iPad, whether it's, conventional medicine, whether it's, these different food products that are just all about convenience and they're saying, Hey, we got you, we got everything, literally everything your kid needs, all the vitamins and minerals are in this Applejack cereal. Great way to start the day.



**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Or multivitamin, right? Or it's in this multivitamin, but you cannot replace food with a vitamin. You could support, you can add back if you want to work on something, but nothing replaces real food. There's just no way, nothing synthetic is the same thing as eating it in a real food. So it doesn't mean you can't take a multivitamin, but you can't assume your multivitamin is going to keep your kid healthy. It's eating the real food. That's going to make them healthy. healthy in the long run, and that comes from us. And going back to what we said, it's not about shaming parents. You know what you know, and then you learn something new, and you do differently. But the only thing that matters is, we all want our kids to be healthy.

We want them to be resilient. We want them to live a long life. We want them to be happy, and we have to take stock of what's going on, and we have to have some humility. And we have to take ownership back of our own health and not assume that the medical system is going to take care of us. It's there if you need it for a serious illness, and it's great if you do that we have that. But that's not what's going to keep you healthy. You are going to keep your kids healthy.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome. Awesome. Now, you also mentioned, if we think about the context, and there are several studies on this now with sugar and the kind of loose comparison to illicit drugs, right? But of course the muddies the water can get a little bit muddied because just like, it's nobody out here, like, you know selling their body to get some sugar, you know what I mean, but sugar is so pervasive in our culture. We don't have to do a lot to get it, number one. And number two, you know you mentioning what happens when we remove it suddenly which will go through withdrawal. And it is just, it is what it is. We could see the behavior change in our children and also in ourselves. Right. And so being mindful of that, and also I'm a big fan of transitioning, right? So like adding in foods that have more naturally occurring sugar, for example, as like, even if somebody, for example, is trying to get off of caffeine, right? Maybe they have headaches from withdrawals, not having it, doing some strong, like green tea, like doing something to just wean off.

Reduce those symptoms to our nullify the symptoms. And so leaning more into let's have more fun with our food Like let's have some sweet foods that are more natural. And so with that being said with this label of a picky eater. We have to understand that our kids and I want to ask you about this. There's a natural apprehension for any of us like trying new things like even as adults, right?

But especially kids and this is something this is like an adaptation like an evolutionary adaptation because what you put in your mouth can kill you, right? And so being aware that our kids are naturally going to be a little bit apprehensive about trying new things. And I want to ask you about this how often or should we be more dedicated to maybe having a little bit

more patience to continue trying foods? Even if they don't like it the first time or even the second or tenth time just being able to, you already added in the piece of making it a different way. But what about patience and continued exposure?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Most definitely. There's a Huge body of research on that and some, for some kids, for some foods, it takes 10, 20, even a hundred times before they're going to like it or they're going to accept that into their diet. So sometimes the consistency and doing it multiple times is really going to be the best way. Especially for a picky eater that you just kind of keep introducing things. Sometimes you do it in small doses, you can put it in something. I've heard a lot of parents, what works really well for them is, maybe they'll put a little bit of something into a smoothie or a drink and then, they might not tell their kid about that little bit in there and like, Oh, you had some spinach in there.

What do you think? And then they realize, Oh, okay, I didn't hate that. So then maybe they'll be more willing to try it. I mean, we're not trying to trick our kids into eating certain foods, but sometimes we just want to get things in and start to move them in a better direction. Yeah, I think for sure we need to be consistent and we need to not give up just because they don't eat something the first time because that's true of most things with kids, right? Whether you're working on sleep or potty training or teaching them, to eat healthy and working on that, it's not going to work the first time, most of the time, right? Sometimes it takes a little bit of consistency. They're going to push back. It could get a little bit, it could get a little more angry before you get past that. If you're gonna take away their sweets, they might not be so happy with you for a couple of days, but we're the parents and sometimes you got to do what you have to do to keep them healthy. And they might not always be the happiest with you in that moment for those few days, but they're gonna thank you when they're You know, 80 and healthy when they're looking back. So sometimes we got to do what's what we know is best for them for their long term health and eating healthy. There's no downside to that. There's really no downside to being mindful of what we eat

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Can I ask you about the... because you've worked with so many people over the years and a lot of parents a lot of kids obviously. Can I ask you about this mindset and maybe where it comes from how to address this because I think that a lot of us grew up in households where we've had really bad experiences with food. Like, for example I remember, maybe I was like five or six and pretty much every time I would eat though, it's just basically like eat it all. Right. But my mom was like, you're not getting up from this table if you don't finish eating this. And I was living with my grandmother at the time, she let me eat whatever I want. And now my mom's like, you're going to eat these black eyed peas before you can get up.

And I'm just, in my head, I'm just like, Well, I guess I'm not leaving this table because I'm, I'll fall, I'll sleep here. You know what I mean? Give me a cover. I'm not going anywhere. And having that, guess what? Never ate peas, beans, any of that stuff until adulthood. All right. I was just like, no, forget that. I'm not, I'm never going to eat this stuff. I tried it and it was like, I almost threw up on the plate. Right.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so going from that. If a person has that experience and then they become a parent, they might just be completely the opposite of like, I will never do that to my child again because that was a terrible experience. And now it's just like, well, if my kid doesn't want it, that's that they eat what they want. I'm never going to quote force my kid, right? So there's this whole spectrum here and I think maybe we can rebound to the other side.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Right, and I think that's true of so many parenting concepts that we're seeing. It used to be very strict parenting and then it moved to really gentle parenting. But the reality is that almost everything's in the middle and a balanced approach is the right way to go. And if you're talking about food, well, we don't necessarily want to force kids to eat things, right? It's not about making kids eat peas, right? It's about making them eat healthier in general and we want to encourage them to try things to take a bite. But if your child does eat the broccoli and hates it or makes them want to throw up. Well, that's not a good food for them. So move to the next thing there's many kinds of foods and many kinds of Apples and broccoli and peas and carrots and all sorts of different things.

So try to work With what they like, keep offering them different things. Don't give up if they don't like something, but try different things. Try it in different ways, ask them to take a bite, don't force them to eat the whole plate of everything. But I think it's important to encourage them to try new foods. And then hopefully you can kind of build that palette over time. And that's where, again, there's no quick fixes for most of this. If you have a picky eater, they're not going to be picky today and the best eater tomorrow. But if we can add in one new food this week, another new food next week, another new food the week after that.

Then, you quickly get to a much broader range of things that you can offer them and there's just so much food out there. There's so many different things that you can eat and sometimes it takes a little research to figure out other things or to get creative or to read a great cookbook, right? I mean, these are the ways that we figure out what to feed our kids. I feel like people and parents feel like they should know everything when it comes to food and we

don't. There's just so much food out there. Most of us again, we're not trained in cooking that much, and so Grab a good cookbook. Watch a youtube video and go on whatever.

I mean, there's a lot of resources now for cooking and you can expand what you know and then you can give that to your kids and then they're going to give that to their families in the future. But If we don't do that if we let them kind of run the show and eat the sugary foods and the chemicals and dyes and all the things that are in there. They're going to get sick and they're not going to change because they don't even know it. And I like you was not the best eater when I was younger and you don't realize until you step away from it how it's making you feel. Most people don't know like you don't you get away from it for a couple weeks and you're like Oh, wow.

I feel a lot better. And then you eat that food and you're like, whoa, I feel terrible eating that piece of bread or that pizza or whatever it is, not to say that you can't eat it ever again, but you eat it and you're like, wow, I feel, but your body is amazing at kind of figuring out how to keep you functioning, even if you're not doing the best things for it. So you have to step away to really know what works for you. And. As a pediatrician getting back to even that it's like the amount of times where Parents don't put together that it's the food that's causing their eczema. It's the food that is the big trigger for whatever and if you just mention Is there anything that seems to make it worse?

Or can we try to get out some of these foods for a few weeks and how many times? That's the answer to the question. It's not always that right? But how many times you just sensitive to dairy and you take that away and they're cold. They had every single week go away or the rash that they had goes away. But most people don't think like that. You don't think that it could be your food. You think it must be something else. It must be just the genetic condition. Oh the cream I'm using isn't working. But you don't think, well, why, right? And that to me has been the most interesting thing getting into the integrative space is I never really thought about the why of so many things as a pediatrician at the beginning because you're not really taught that.

You're taught how to treat it, right? You're not really taught to think about all of those other factors. I mean, certainly you're In some sense, you're thinking about why, but not in the way where you get a rash. Okay, well, what's causing the eczema? What is the underlying factor? If if you sit on a tack, and your bum's hurting, it's like, if you will, if you give somebody Tylenol. It's not going to make them better, right? You have to get rid of the tack. That's the thing. It's like, it's a very, silly example, but it's, if, The dairy is causing your problem if the creams or lotions that you're using are causing the problem. If the chemical cleaner that you're at your kid's school is causing the issue. I mean, it's been wild to see that parents will tell me.

Oh My kids switched schools and I realized that the eczema they've had for the last three years went away three days later. You know, we don't think that just some sort of cleaner could be the thing or some chemical, but it can be, I mean, your bodies are telling you stuff, right? Your bodies are telling you when you have a rash that something's going on and we're not listening to it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh, that's so good. It's so important. It's the most relevant and vital feedback your body will tell you. And we're very good at self regulating if we're given the opportunity. Right. And that analogy was sitting on a tack and then taking a Tylenol. Okay. That's a fantastic analogy because also though what the Tylenol can do is numb it a little bit, right?

So we don't feel it as much. Right and this is speaking to, again my son being here today He's very good at self regulating having “too much of something right or something not making him feel well”. Especially again, he has a basis of really High quality food. He's a very healthy kid. But he knows when he has something that can throw him out of balance and he said it many times over the years And we have that ability to pay attention. But what if you are just this is the foundation of your diet, right? You become kind of calloused, right?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** You start to become numb to it, right and you might not get those same feedbacks, but he's not gonna recognize that unless we talk about it, right. Unless from a young age you start to teach you our families, our kids about Recognizing the symptoms, listening to their body, understanding that what you do matters. If we just say it's our genetics, if we just step back and say, well, it's just the way that it is, then you're never gonna be paying attention to things. And that is what figures it out. It's not, I'm not some magical doctor that figures things out for patients. It's usually them that figures it out. It's just reminding people that, you have to think about what you're doing all day, every day, when it comes to your health.

If you want to figure out what's the trigger for your eczema or your allergies, you have to pay attention. Because, yeah, I can run a bunch of tests and maybe that'll be helpful, but most of the time it's not what's helpful. It's the parent that says, Oh, I realize that it's the Sandbox that we go to every week. Oh it I realized that it's the tomatoes that we're putting in this You know the can soup whatever like usually the parents figure it out Over time because they start paying attention to what they're doing And that's what we need to teach our kids so they pay attention So when they don't feel good in their stomachs, then they're like, oh, I just ate that.

I don't feel good well, maybe That food is making you have issues and that comes out in multiple different ways, but you can identify that as you get older Then maybe you don't eat as much pizza anymore because that makes you feel bad and you eat something else But you will never know that unless you think about it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Thank you for adding that piece as well. Now, this is so crazy that we've gotten to this point where we need something like this. But we were talking about before the show, you know when we're bringing a new life into the world, The game has changed. It's a very different situation in particular from knowledge being passed on right from generations, just spending time with each other and being there. For the birth of a new child. And so there's a lot of gaps in our knowledge base. And there's so much that new parents just simply don't know. Nobody's talked to them about it. They never thought about it. And when you have a new baby, it can be just incredibly disorienting. You know pretty much for anybody And all of these decisions that you suddenly have to make and you might not even be aware that these decisions were coming up and so Your new book right here.

I've got it early copy and everybody needs to get this book if you know somebody who's having a kid or they have little ones It's so freaking valuable. It's called Parenting at Your Child's Pace. All right. Even the title in of itself is about paying attention to your unique child because you kept going back to this again and again, that your child is unique and there isn't a cookie cutter formula, but these are the things to think about.

And so you literally start off by taking people day one, baby's arrived, right? What's happening with the umbilical cord? What is the amount of time? Right before clamping because you share how that blood exchange happens with the kids and how just minutes can make a difference and also you repeat this really important tenet, which is the best practices in medicine have continued to change these past decades. This is where we are now. This is the knowledge that we have today. Yeah, it might have been different 30 years ago. This is what we were doing. It was wrong. This is what we're doing today. And so one of the first things that you talk about You On day one, as soon as the baby arrives, is the SSC. All right, talk about that.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Yeah, so the skin to skin contact is so important. I mean, it's something that, I mentioned in the book, because I had, I talked to my own parents about my birth and how things were. And it was like, they whisked me off to the room. I mean, we used to watch TV shows and there's that room with all the babies in there. And now things have changed so much when we're talking about skin to skin that they, almost all of the research shows that giving mom breast milk The baby and having them on the chest improves maternal health and improves the baby's health. On so many factors And we have a ton of evidence There are very few things we have as much evidence for at this point that it can be very beneficial and

so I think it's just important to know that if you can keep your baby with you for 30 minutes an hour, whatever it is then that can be really helpful and beneficial. And there are just so many key questions and topics that I get asked about from parents over and over again, and that is what I wanted to put in the book.

It's not a book that tells you what to do. It is more about trying to help parents to de stress, to know the information that's out there, and then to help you think through the questions so you can make the best decision for you. Because again, I go back to medicine, Social media, whatever it is, it's so much about telling you, it's like, "this is the one way to do it, even" though there are multiple different ways that, that, that can be just as effective for different families. And, one great example is feeding your baby, right? It's like baby-led weaning versus breastfeeding. Purees. And if you don't know baby light weaning, it's giving them little pieces of food as opposed to pureeing it up. And there's this whole world online on social media about like, you've got to do baby light weaning because it's better for this, and this.

But then parents are so stressed. Cause like my kid's going to choke. I don't want to do that. And they come to me and they say, Dr. Joel, we're about to start feeding and I've read all this stuff. And I, I'm just really not very comfortable to do baby light weaning, but everybody says that I have to, my friend said that I have to, but I don't want to, and it's like, well, why can't you just do both? Why can't you do a little purees? If you're stressed the entire time you're feeding your kids, then how is that good for you? How is that good for your kids? And let's take a step back. There are kids in the world that have no food. So baby lightweighting purees, does it really make that much of a difference? Is that going to be the difference for them going to college? No, it's not. So stop worrying so much about it and do what makes sense for you in that moment. And your kids will eat just fine if you don't start the first day with a little bit of chunks, but you just puree it. Like it's not the end of the world. I don't know.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I love that too. You keep reassuring us in the book as well. It's like a very subtle like, you know It's gonna be okay and our kids are resilient, right? You keep pointing us back to that of how resilient our kids are and this is true. Like just look at what our kids can go through even living in this environment and still continue to grow to survive, but we were talking about thriving, not just surviving, but we are very resilient, a very resilient species.

Now within this, you share just staying on the skin to skin contact that, there are common practices, as you just mentioned, getting whisked off to the nursery, right. And mom doesn't even get to really spend time with the baby when the baby first gets here. And there is a practice for a long while of like sponge cleaning the baby. Immediately as well, cleaning them off. In the book you share that today, the World Health Organization, the WHO, recommends

holding off on bathing a newborn for 24 hours, or at least 6 hours if 24 isn't feasible. And then you go on to detail why, and you talk about all these different science backed benefits.

Again, a lot of it has to do with the stress response of mother and baby, really helping to calibrate that nervous system. The microbiome, the data transfer and the microbes, how important that is. Establishing breastfeeding, obviously promoting oxytocin, so many other benefits. Reducing the risk of postpartum depression. Wow, like these are all things that it just they weren't considered for a time.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Yeah, it's so interesting to see where things shift and That's where and I think what medicine needs to be again. It's just going through the data with the best information that we have, synthesizing it so that it's useful for a family so they don't have to read 15 studies. And saying well here is what has been found. It doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be the right thing for you. But in general, this is what we found To be the best or this is what we found if you do this, then you're gonna have these theoretical benefits. So let's make that decision and a lot of times if you're working with a doctor. Hopefully you're gonna trust their opinion and do what they say, but it's not about me telling you to do skin to skin it's about me informing you about it. So that way you can even know that's a thing that could be important when you go into the hospital because if you aren't aware of some of these things then If the nurse does want to take the child away for whatever reason, then you're empowered to ask a question.

Oh, okay. I really wanted to do skin to skin. Can I have the child, my child back? And they might say, no, we need to do this. This is an emergency. We have to, okay, fine. And that, that, that is what it is. But in those scenarios where you have some choice, they might say, okay, yeah, sure. That's no problem. Here you go. Right. And then you get to have it. But if you don't know about these things, then you don't even know what to ask.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. He also shared for children that. Would wind up in the NICU, premature births and how skin to skin contact dramatically improves health outcomes for that and it's so crazy that we have to have data on some of these things just affirm something that seems so obvious But you know, we have a system that is really medicalized this experience of childbirth as well. And this is again, this is not to say that it's an intent, intentional, but just kind of removing that initial bond with the parents because also skin to skin contact is helpful with the fathers. You shared that as well, which was very, heartwarming for me, coming up on here father's day.

As of this recording, and just finding ways to be involved in one of the things that you noted in your experience and you being a pediatrician, but still having these different concerns



when you were there with your wife and, this birthing process, one of the things that you shared was just, Especially with a healthy birth just being able to keep an eye on your child, right? So you can be involved in decisions not to say and you also share because immediately I was thinking of that You know those scenarios, who knows how many times there's lifetime movies on this stuff Yeah, the kid gets switched out and you end up raising someone else. What's gonna happen to me?

You know what I mean? But it was more so just so that decisions that are being made like maybe somebody might forget just again things happen You Oh, this kid is supposed to have this procedure, right? Or be given this thing, so just being able to keep an eye on your baby and being involved In the decisions that are being made. These are things for parents to consider you lay all this stuff out you even talk about, common considerations circumcision we mentioned the cord clamping you talk about, this new rage today of like the placenta and like what do you do with it and all this different stuff and you like You really boil it down to like more common sense answers But you're still giving people the heads up on these decisions that sometimes people just aren't aware until they're in it.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Definitely and trying to give a balanced approach as opposed to what you see online, which is so frustrating that it's like you have to do it this one way, and that is not true of almost anything. So many people are trying to sell you something online, so many people have studied their one way of sleep training, or their one way of potty training, or they've looked at one portion of the research and they're very biased. On it and so they give you that opinion and they tell you all the reasons why you have to do it that way. But that's not true for most parents, but it stresses you out and there are real things to be stressed about in the world. There's enough to be stressed about we need to de stress.

We need to stress about the right things. It doesn't mean we shouldn't be mindful, but we don't want to be overly stressed about every single situation. And I think that's where a lot of parents are these days and the news and social media just don't help because it's this constant stream of fear and headlines and worst case scenarios and that's not true For most people. We don't want to be comparing ourselves all the time and another great example I have is You know based on where I work. I take care of a lot of prominent people and I see sometimes let's say at the one month old visit Where nobody looks their best as a parent at one with a one month old. They haven't slept in a month. They have spit up all over their clothing, maybe wearing sweatpants or whatever.

But then i'll see them five minutes later on their social media posting, you know a beautiful picture with a whole camera crew there in their nursery, and they're writing like hashtag blast hashtag best time ever having a can I'm, like you were just crying in my office five minutes ago and I've been to your house, and like, the whole place is a mess, but like, maybe that room you guys cleaned up for the photo, and then, the other parents, that's what they see, and they're comparing themselves to that, which isn't real, and we just have to remember that what we're seeing isn't always real, and we're missing that feedback loop from our own family a lot of times. And the reality of the world and so yes, it's it's okay to be informed but we're way over informed and we're comparing ourselves to an ideal that doesn't exist and I think people think about that sometimes and In just the world of modeling or something like that. But it's the same thing in parenting. The same thing everybody's kind of showing off One side of things they're showing off their child who's walking early, but not talking late, right?

So you only see the photo of them walking at nine months. You're like, Oh, well, Johnny's not walking at 10 months. I guess there's something wrong. Even though the average kid walks at a year and a lot of kids don't walk till after you, cause that means 50 percent of kids are not walking at a year and your kid is 14 months. And now you think something is wrong with them, but you didn't see that the other child's kid still isn't talking, but yours is.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh, man, this is so good. And. One of the big takeaways for all of us really and this isn't regardless of your current situation You know regardless of how old your kids might be or even if you have kids. Just understanding how important it is to pay attention right like my Youngest son who's sitting in here with us today. He was born, he's 12 now but he was born during a time where Smartphones for us like I was one of the last people to get a smartphone. And so my wife would share that a lot of times she wasn't Like on social media, like it just wasn't a part of our reality and she was just with him. She was just like, it was just me and him.

I was just with him. I was just paying attention to my baby. But now it's such a pervasive part of our culture that we're not spending as much time paying attention. And we're seeing this huge uptick in our child's exposure to these different media platforms and technology and the radically increased incidents of things like depression and anxiety and all these different things that we again, it's very obvious. But we're wanting to help our kids, but we're not helping ourselves, right? And so one of your posts and you share these great posts where you're holding a whiteboard and You share that there is no app to replace a parent's lap, right. And just spending time with your kids reading to your kids. That's what we did every night for so many years and sometimes some of them stories like I've read this book Brayden like I would let him pick the book at a certain time.

He kept picking the same one, right? And before he could actually read so we'll just say maybe he was three he memorized the book so he would read it Right? But he's knows it literally word for word not reading a word on the page himself. But you know us just being there and being present and having that time together Before the social media integration start to creep its way in. But it's not a big part of our family obviously, but you know, it's still there and for many families. I See this all and I know you do as well. We go to Target and you know the kids scrolling on that iPad, maybe a two year old and they're like Tony Stark. Just like..

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** They're very talented. It's very impressive.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Minority report right but then there's so many other things they can't do right and this is again. This is not about comparison. It's not to damn us for making these decisions. There have been times I've definitely I've been at meetings and I've given my phone to play this Ninjago video game that I had on my phone, right and You know It's great to have these tools because the parents throughout time have given their kids different toys and things like that to keep them Preoccupied while you do stuff that you need to do but when it becomes the norm when it becomes a Major part of your family's culture. It pulls each other in apart.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** It does and Like you said I share the very similar belief that it's not screens that are evil. It's what we're doing on it that can be an issue. Or realistically what we're not doing is really the big issue if you're on your phone Or your screen all day and you're not spending family time. You're not getting outside. Then we're losing something you can learn on a screen. You absolutely can. Basically, all the research shows you don't learn as well as if somebody's teaching you to have that active engagement. But that doesn't mean that you can't watch sesame street and learn something. It doesn't mean that if you're on a plane and your child's watching a screen then that's worse than your child having a tantrum and screaming for three hours.

Like there, there's a balance, right? And I think that you can get a lot of good from screens and also they're not going anywhere. So I think we need to be mindful stewards of screens as opposed to kind of getting rid of them all. You can move to the mountains if you want to and have no screens. I have friends that have done that and that, that's fine, but that's not the reality for most people. parents and most families these days, but the average teenager is on screens like seven to nine hours a day now. And that's not to say you shouldn't do your schoolwork. That's not to say you shouldn't be on your screen ever.

But if we are doing that all day, then what are they not doing? They're not engaging outside. They're not getting sunlight and These things are vital to our health. If you're not getting

vitamin D, it's related to every condition. So yeah, that doesn't mean you should shame your kids for being on a screen or never watch a TV show or as a parent, if you're watching something and you're. Seven month old happens to turn their head. Like, I've had calls about that. Like, oh, my kid was watching five minutes, and now I feel really bad because the American Academy of Pediatrics said no screen time before two. And I'm like, okay, but that's not real, right? Like, who, who is living in the modern society that doesn't have a screen on or isn't looking at their phone? Like, that, that is not gonna turn your child's brain to mush. It's if you put them in front of the screen, for three hours, instead of parenting and reading to them, that's what's going to be the issue because it's, they're not learning, they're not developing, they're not playing. So don't fear a screen, just make sure that they're doing age appropriate things on it and minimize that amount of time within reason.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Now the subtitle of your book is the integrative pediatrician's guide to the first three years? What inspired you to put this book together?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** What inspired me was I wanted to get to parents from day one. I think that you know as I went through my career it started in integrative medicine. Then I realized after opening up my own practice about a decade ago how interested people were in it. So that's what led me to start doing the social media which I was never really all that into but you know, I think it's very useful to kind of get your message out there, which was great. But on social media, you can only do things in small snippets. And so you can't really dive into things in any depth. And I thought it was really important to get to parents early. Most parenting books these days are written by therapists or moms. And there's a lot of great books out there. But the ones from the past mostly used to be written by pediatricians and, Dr.

Spock had this seminal book back in the day. But now most of the parenting books miss the health component and you can't separate out health from parenting. You can't talk about tantrums, if you don't talk about diet and sleep because how much of the issue is actually from our health. And when I'm seeing Chronic disease rates at 50 as a parent and someone who cares about health. We have to get to it before. And so that's even why I start the book with the first chapter talking about health. It's not the parenting questions. We get into the newborn phase in the first real chapter, but the intro chapter is about health. Because we need to de stress as parents and we need to focus on the foundations of our health. Because that is what's going to create a long lasting healthy child and no book parenting book that I know has ever done that And so that's really what I wanted to do. I wanted to start from day one thinking about our own health.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And it's it this the cool thing about this is that there is a gap in the education market for a book like this and it fills that gap so incredibly well.

And if you could and by the way, everybody listening. Right now, you can pre order the book, and I highly encourage you to. We want to make this a big bestseller. So pre order the book and can you let them know what they're going to get as bonuses?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Yeah, so if you order the book then you can get the intro chapter right away. You can get a bonus chapter and you can also get access to my vip membership community, which is a whole bunch of parents. We're all in there chatting parents can ask questions. You can ask it to each other. You can ask anything so if you want to extend your knowledge or ask things that are a little bit more specific to your family, then you can do that. And my email is there on [parentingatyourchildspace.com](http://parentingatyourchildspace.com), so you can just email me there to get access to all that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome. And where can people pre order the book?

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** They can pre order it, wherever you can get books. So Amazon, Barnes Noble, or you can get it through the website, [parentingatyourchildspace.com](http://parentingatyourchildspace.com).

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome. Awesome. Well, this has been amazing. And we were having a good time talking about things before the show even started. And I'm telling you right now, what's going on with our kids. It's just the greatest example for us of like, there's something that's just not okay. The impact on us as adults is one thing. And we've seen our health issues growing precipitously, but our kids. They don't have a chance, they're getting here and they're just being inundated with all this stuff.

And you brought up this topic of informed consent. A lot of this stuff is just happening to them. And, it's a big responsibility as a parent. It's, for me at this point in my life, I think it is the greatest responsibility, because it's such a gift that's been presented to us and, and also for us to not beat ourselves up for the mistakes we made because we're going to make them. We're going to make mistakes, but also having this responsibility, we can do a lot of things really well. And, that's, what's so cool is just.. Today you redirected this conversation several times too. It's not about these things that are happening that we're exposed to it's about what we're not doing, right?

So we were living at a time technology isn't going anywhere, but what are the things that are the epigenetic inputs that my kid needs to really thrive. And let's do more of those things. Let's not villainize all these things. Let's add in more of this good stuff and so again, can you let everybody know where they can pick up a copy of the book and also where they can follow you on Instagram.

**DR. JOEL GATOR:** Yeah on instagram It's @Dr. Joel gator and you can get the book on parenting at your child's pace. com or amazon or twitter Wherever all the places where you get books, I guess these days.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome. I appreciate you coming to hang out with us. Thanks for having me here. Awesome. Dr. Joel Gator everybody.

Thank you so much for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this is. Share with the parents that you know, in particular, those that have little ones, those that are going to have, be grandparents to little ones and people that are working on having a baby or they're about to have a baby, they just had a baby. This is incredibly important to fill the education gaps for those early years in. Creating really healthy and thriving Children, which unfortunately, today it has become more and more complex and we've got to do something differently. Like we've got to look at the outcomes with our kids and say enough is enough and really take hold to some of these principles that we talked about today and further our education because it is our responsibility.

Shout out to Whitney Houston. I believe in children of the future. Shout out to Marty Mar, love the kids. All right, we talk about these things in pop culture about our kids being the future. No, real talk. We have to take care of our children. There's this wonderful quote from Nelson Mandela that says, there's no greater indicator of the soul of a society than the way that it treats its children. So this is up to us. We're really exposing ourselves in our soul right now with what we're allowing to happen with our children. And we can change that. It's up to us. We could start in our own homes. And that's where the power really is. And that starts to filter itself out. There's a tipping point that we're working on right now to change all this.

But again, it starts with us. I appreciate you so much for tuning into this episode. We've got some epic masterclasses and world class guests coming your way very soon. So make sure to stay tuned. Take care. Have an amazing day. And I'll talk with you soon. And for more after the show, make sure to head over to [TheModelHealthShow.com](http://TheModelHealthShow.com). That's where you can find all of the show notes. You can find transcriptions, videos for each episode. And if you got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well. And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome. And I appreciate that so much. And take care. I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.