



THE SPECTRUM OF HEALTH

— P O D C A S T —

Podcast Session #22

Gut Health for You And Your Family

with Ashley Harris

During the birth of her son, Ashley Harris was put on broad-spectrum antibiotics as a preventative measure. Over the next few months both Ashley and her newborn son started getting sick. The culprit: bad gut bacteria. After her experience, she founded LoveBug Probiotics (along with her husband) to share her knowledge with other families. Ashley speaks with Dr. Schaffner about her own experience, how they developed LoveBug, and how probiotics can help your health.

00:07 Dr. Christine Schaffner: Welcome to the Spectrum of Health Podcast, I'm Dr. Christine Schaffner, and today I'm speaking with Ashley Harris, the co-founder of LoveBug Probiotics. I was introduced to Ashley through a colleague, and I felt that this was such an important topic as we know so much about our children's health starts in their gut. Ashley has a personal passionate story, she really found the importance of having a good microbiome not only for her health but for her son's, and she really took this experience and passion and created a wonderful line of probiotics for children and for moms. We hope you enjoy this interview.

00:52 DS: Welcome Ashley, I'm excited to have you on the podcast today.

00:55 Ashley Harris: Thanks so much for having me Christine, I'm super excited to be here.

01:00 DS: Well, I am so excited to learn about your product line and your story and I just have to mention before we get started, my three-month-old, Ann Marie, I call "Lovebug" all the time, so I just love that your company's named that as well. Being a new mom and really being focused on motherhood, and children, I'm really excited to share your knowledge with our audience today.

01:24 AH: Thanks, we all have a lovebug in our lives, don't we?

01:28 DS: Oh, we do.

01:29 AH: The name typically comes from, obviously, our bacteria, it's a probiotic company, so our bacteria, you can also call "bugs." For so long, we've been antimicrobial, with our hand sanitizers and our use of antibiotics. I think it's important for our health, to love our good bugs. We like to have a sense of humor and fun with all the names.

01:55 DS: Well, you've accomplished it. I love that, and I see a lot of patients with chronic illness and we're always talking about different infections and bugs and all of these things. Well, let's dive in. I know that you have a really interesting story and background. How did you start LoveBug?

02:16 AH: I'm not a doctor or pharmacist, and I don't have a background in medicine. I really came to this because I got pregnant, and as a first time mom, you're just overwhelmed with all this information, and it's coming hanging from all angles, from your friends, from the internet, from TV, from the doctor.

02:44 AH: I tried to learn as much as I could, but one of the things I didn't research and didn't understand was group B strep. I didn't know anything about it. So essentially, and this is only since 2002, at 36 weeks they test all pregnant women in the US for group B strep. My doctor said, "Oh you know you're positive, don't worry about it. We'll handle it on the day." And I didn't push or pursue that at the time, because at that point, you're so pregnant, right? You don't even want more info. So, I didn't pursue it. But what it means is that as soon as you show up to the hospital, they give you IV penicillin and you're basically on this antibiotic the entire time you're in

labor. And so, our son was a little bit late, almost a week and a half, this big nine-and-a-half pound baby.

03:40 AH: We thought for a minute, what are all those antibiotics doing? And, obviously, it's there to kill off the group B strep, but it does impact the bacteria that you're meant to pass on to the baby. Hudson, our son, is healthy, a nine-and-a-half pound big boy. We brought him home and we instantly noticed that he had horrible colic. Seasoned moms would come to visit with three or four kids and they'd be like, "Oh, that's pretty bad colic." He had digestive issues... I could go on just telling stories. He would scream and cry and he couldn't settle in, and he was struggling, and you're just so desperate to help your baby. He had a bloated tummy, he had digestive issues. We couldn't keep enough diapers in the house.

04:35 AH: Ultimately a couple months out, I think he was at about the three-month mark, he started to develop eczema all over his body. Frantically, I'm trying to understand, Okay, what's going on here? I start reading all the literature; you hear that eczema is really common in babies. But you don't really hear about why it's so common. At that same time, I started to develop eczema and it was the first time in my life I had ever had eczema or a skin issue. I knew it enough to know that it's not contagious. So, why would my baby and I both be getting it at the same time?

05:19 AH: So, I marched to the pediatrician's office and said, "What's going on here?" and in typical fashion, a prescription was swiftly written. It was for a steroid cream and the doctor said said, "Off you go, you're going to be fine." That wasn't sufficient because the last thing I wanted was to suppress

the symptom and not figure out what's going on here. I was very fortunate, I did a ton of research and I was very fortunate to find some incredible doctors that practice functional medicine, and they tested everything. It's a medicine of "Why?" and not "What?" to find the underlying cause. So through this battery of tests, they found that I had a severe dysbiosis which is that gut imbalance. When you don't have enough of the good bugs, the bad bugs move in.

06:07 AH: I had severe candida which is no fun to get rid of, but ultimately I was able to, and then I had to fix leaky gut. The doctors said, "We did the protocol: Remove, restore, replace, repopulate," but they said, "Start taking probiotics," and then obviously, because they knew the full history with my son and the antibiotics, they said, "Start giving it to him in powder form."

06:28 AH: So I raced home, started doing everything I was told, and within just the fastest amount of time, like two to three weeks, everything changed. Obviously you first see the eczema clear up, but then this colic disappeared, and Hudson slept through the night for the first time. His demeanor, everything, changed. It was mind blowing, and the same happened with me, my eczema cleared up, but then I started to feel better than I felt even before I got pregnant. They talk about brain fog, you don't realize you have brain fog and digestive issues until they're gone. I was so fascinated that I was like, "Okay, I have to figure out how this happened so fast and so quickly. I went through a cycle of fascination, which was obviously the first part, to kind of horror, because then you learn how common this is, and how many moms and babies are out there who don't

even know, and don't figure out why or what's going on--70 million Americans have digestive diseases.

07:50 AH: It's just a staggering number, and so much of that is related to our guts, and the antibiotics in our food chain. Finally, the horror shifted to passion to do something about it. That was the genesis, and I said, "We've got to get out there and educate; moms and babies have to know." Then obviously also for the wider population, I wanted to create a product better than what's out there. Most important, if anything, was to educate, because I deeply believe that the number one most important thing that you can do to improve your health is to get educated. Once you're educated, every single day, your choices are different. I think that's key, and that's what I'm most passionate about.

08:47 DS: Thank you for sharing your story. It's in these stories that, in the moment, we don't always see the silver lining. But I think you've really transformed your experience, and it's just so amazing that you've created this product line to really help people. I have to echo that I also believe education is key. After having my daughter recently, I feel like I live in hippy Seattle, where we have lots of options, and I know so much, but I still found myself having to protect her and make sure that I was giving her the best. I was sitting there thinking the same thing, like, "Oh my gosh, I have to be proactive, and I know all of this and think about how the average person doesn't really have the opportunity to even make different decisions because they just don't have this knowledge." I think that's really wonderful that you're educating us all. I'm sure you were so relieved once the colic resolved. From my perspective, that's a pretty simple tool, on some level--I

know it takes a lot of effort on your part when you probably did the diet and everything, but it's a pretty simple intervention to get such a dramatic result, right?

10:00 AH: Oh, absolutely.

10:02 DS: How did you create your product line, and how did this this passion turn into the probiotics that you're choosing to work with now?

10:16 AH: We spent about a year talking to everybody that we could, and finding the leading scientists, because a lot of this is an emerging field. It's ironic too, because 2500 years ago, Hippocrates, who's the father of medicine, said, "Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food." He also said, "All disease begins in the gut," and that was 2500 years ago! So it's an ancient thing, but in the last century, what have we been doing to our guts with all these antibiotics. It's an ancient thing, but also a very fascinating emerging field. I talked to leading scientists, and the manufacturers. There are a lot of probiotics on the market, but a lot of them are incredibly ineffective. When you're choosing a probiotic, you want a multi-strain product.

11:31 AH: I didn't know this before, but through the research the year before we launched, I learned that your microbiome, which is the collection of bacteria in our guts, is an ecosystem, and like all ecosystems, diversity is health, and we lose that diversity through the standard American diet, antibiotics, and stress. It's fascinating, the link between the gut and the brain. So all these things are hurting our microbiome, and you really need a

probiotic that is multi-strain, so that was our first thing, we wanted to find that. Then we wanted to make sure that we found the leading delivery technology, because the other issue with probiotics is that if the bacteria dies in your stomach acid, and doesn't make it down to the lower GI tract which is where your microbiome lives, you're not going to have a beneficial effect, it's just not going to get there, it's going to die too soon.

12:31 AH: It's just an incredibly creative thing to build a product and create the artwork and the content and the messaging of the education. I was really passionate about that, I really enjoyed that part of it. We now have a family of eight products. And the most important thing, obviously, to me, was creating a line specifically for pregnancy and babies. Because, as we'll talk about I hope a little bit later, that's the most important time to really be building up your microbiome, because you're going to be passing it on to your child. We also have a line for babies, a stage program from birth to age four to build their microbiome, and then we have products for older kids, and then a range for adults, for immunity, digestive health, and specifically for women.

13:24 DS: Wow, you've been busy!

13:28 AH: Yes, you don't sleep.

13:31 DS: Oh my goodness. I think you've made some really great points. I've had Dr. Cowen, and also, Kiran Krishnan, founder of MegaSpore, on the podcast, and I am a firm believer that our health begins in our gut. Kiran, who created MegaSpore, shared that our immune system and our

microbial balance starts from conception to age 2. It's such a critical window of time to get our immune systems on board and our digestion on board.

14:09 AH: I would love to talk about that for just one second.

14:11 DS: Yeah, please.

14:13 AH: I think it's the BBC that came out with an article about the skyrocketing, unacceptable rates of C-sections around the world. In the US we have a 33% C-section rate, and there are even countries above 50%. It's growing all over the world, and that rate has doubled in the last 15 years alone. We're really in uncharted territory. I don't know if you're aware, but the last two years, the life expectancy in this country has gone down, and I think back in May, they predicted that this year it would also go down, so we have had three consecutive years with a life expectancy decline.

15:15 AH: I think we really need to be spending a lot more time looking at pregnancy and also crucially how we're giving birth, and then those first few years, because babies are meant to be born through the vaginal canal, where they get the good bacteria from mom. She literally seeds baby's gut and is the basis for baby's immune system. Then between birth and age, some say two, it's closer to three, the baby's microbiome is developing, and by age three, it reaches the baseline that's going to be the microbiome that they're essentially going to have with them for the rest of their life. People are like, "Should babies be taking probiotics?"

16:01 AH: Absolutely, because at three years old, you're walking around, you might not look like an adult or act like an adult but you have this adult microbiome. You mentioned age two because we're not giving babies the right defenses, a lot of the time through not seeding babies' gut which will be their immune system, it means that they get sick more often. Then you go to the pediatrician. This is the experience I had, we all have it and they're really giving you a lot of antibiotics. Even the CDC... I'm not saying anything controversial. The CDC says up to 50% of antibiotics aren't necessary.

16:47 AH: And of course, they save lives, 100%, but even if the CDC is saying so many aren't necessary, we really as parents I think have to question our doctors and get educated and know the right questions to ask because the under twos group in the US, is getting more antibiotics per capita than any other age group. That is crazy to think about, because their guts are still developing, their brains are developing, and we don't give them the right defenses. And then we're kind of assaulting them, insult to injury, with all these antibiotics. There has to be a huge shift in what we do, but how we look at this critical stage, because of the decreasing life expectancy and skyrocketing rates of things we're seeing with children that we never did. Adult diabetes, type 2 diabetes, is now not for adults only, autoimmunity and allergies are common, "nuts" is a four-letter... My son just started kindergarten and "nuts" is a four-letter word. Right? Things are changing rapidly. We've got to make some big changes.

17:53 DS: I'm in complete agreement from my vantage point. When people are sick, they're really, really sick. The rates of neurological illness and

autoimmunity are on the rise, and the rates of autism continue to increase. Just from an observer's position, we have to see that something is not going right, in the way that we approach health. I think this is so essential that we focus on the early stage of life. Ashley, I know that you also focus on preconception. When we think about the stages of where we can support our immune systems to hopefully for all of us to see a shift in increasing our health and lifespan, what recommendations are you seeing around probiotics, for preconception, in regards to how there's also an increase in infertility? I know a lot of families are having a hard time conceiving these days. What have you learned on your journey around that?

18:56 AH: It's a great question, and one that people don't ask enough that they don't ask enough. It's a difficult question too, because infertility is very personal, there's just so much emotion tied around it. It's a tough question but one very important to look at. At least in my world, the microbiome has a huge impact on this and people don't realize it. I talked about the gut microbiome. The vagina has its own microbiome and its own bacterial make-up and everybody is a little bit unique, but there's things that you need to certainly have in there. Your audience has probably heard 'microbiome' a lot and they're familiar with it, but it's essentially the collection of bacteria that live in a certain area of our body, and like I said, the vagina has its own. When you have a baby on your mind, and it's really frustrating because there's only a tiny window every month to get pregnant, but it's worse when you miss this tiny little window because of an infection.

20:06 AH: So there's yeast infections, there's bacterial infections, and the health of the vaginal microbiome is incredibly important because aside from these infections which can impact fertility, they've found that BV, or bacterial vaginosis, can impact miscarriages, preterm labor and low birth weight. A lot of times people don't know that they have it. I think the CDC says something like 30% of women can have BV at any time. The makeup of the bacteria in our vaginal tract is meant to prevent these infections. If you have a healthy vaginal tract and the flora is right, there's less incidences of BV and also of yeast infections.

20:52 AH: The other thing I'll talk about is that with the vaginal microbiome heavily impacts getting pregnant due to the pH levels. Now, the strains that you're meant to have down there in the vaginal tract are lactobacilli strains predominantly, and these lactobacilli strains create lactic acid which of course, creates a certain pH level. I think it's supposed to be something like 4.5. That's the acidic environment that is less hospitable to BV and pathogens. But then this cycle happens where you'll get an infection, you'll go to the doctor, and then they'll give you antibiotics, broad-spectrum which then kill off the good bugs and the bad so you kill off the BV. But if you don't replenish yourself with these lactobacilli strains, it's a vicious cycle and it's going to happen again.

21:58 AH: Just on the pH level--within your cycles every month, the pH level changes and the body takes care of it itself. For a sperm to survive, you need a much more alkaline environment, closer to seven, and that's a big shift, 4.5 to seven. But what is happening is that the woman's vagina is naturally supposed to go back down to that 4.5. It's having trouble if you

don't have enough of those lactobacilli down there to create the acidic environment, and when you don't have these shifts that you're meant to, acidic to alkaline, it can impact fertility in a big way. People aren't looking at it enough. It is important to replenish yourself, because we're all getting these antibiotics that are impacting our health. Replenishing with the good bacteria, and specifically for women trying to get pregnant, with strains of lactobacilli that will create that environment, that makes it more possible to get pregnant.

23:06 DS: I think the over-prescribing of antibiotics is a huge factor. I've had several people speak about some of the environmental factors that are really destroying our gut microbiome and also the active ingredient in Roundup, glyphosate, that we're all overly exposed to, which is also an antibiotic. I think it's good for people to understand that it's not only what we're doing with our personal health, but that there's also this environmental pressure that we're all up against, and that's also why we're seeing these increased rates. I'm so glad that you are sharing that. So how, if I take oral probiotics, does that affect my vaginal flora? There are suppositories as well, but I know that's a question that comes up a lot. I'd love for you to answer that.

24:02 AH: Of course. I'm so glad you brought up glyphosate, because aside from taking broad spectrum antibiotics in the foods that we eat, let's think about conventional tampons--cotton is the most heavily pesticide laden crop in the world. It pains me because of course, for years, and years, and years, I used conventional tampons, the pesticide residue was there, and I wonder how it impacted my flora, and did that set me up for

these infections? With our probiotics, we use organic cotton in the bottle-- we have glass bottles, and we put organic cotton in the bottles. I was like, "Well, I'm not going to put glyphosate or pesticide residue cotton next to these love bugs that I love so much that you're going to ingest every day.

25:16 AH: I'm thrilled with all the natural alternatives coming out now in the media, all the organic alternatives for women because it's crucial. Like you said, as a mom, you look at everything in a different way, I think you've got to look at everything in your life in a different way.

25:41 DS: Absolutely, I'm so glad you brought that up because tampons are absolutely not talked about... People I think understand organic food, and then as they start becoming more educated, they start looking at, "Oh, my toilet paper," or, "My skin care lotion," or, "My hair, my shampoo," and not everybody always makes the connection to every part of our walk of life.

26:10 AH: That's that environment. It's in us, around us, and it's interesting, the word "environment", because it makes you think the sky above and the ozone hole and all this stuff, but really, your environment is close to you and in you and it's the food that you're ingesting and the chemicals and all that kind of stuff, it's the stuff we put on our skin. While it sounds like a term that's really outside of us, it's much closer to home.

26:40 DS: We have this genetic blueprint, but it's really how our genes interact with our environment, and that's how we express our genes. That's

the whole field of epigenetics. So our environment is so big in how our body decides how to be healthy or not.

27:02 AH: I was blown away when I learned that 99% of DNA that we carry around with us is bacterial DNA, and only 1% is human DNA, which is just crazy, right? DNA from all that different bacteria that we're carrying around does send signals to our DNA like you just said--environment, or epigenetics, and it is such a fascinating but exciting field of science now where they're looking at how bacteria impacts our DNA, and even with cancer patients, how that's impacting chemo.

28:04 DS: I know we could talk all day, it sounds like, but, how does taking an oral probiotic translate in improving our vaginal flora?

28:15 AH: Yes, great question. So bacteria are amazing tiny tiny tiny little creatures and they move very quickly. One thing that blew me away is that when baby is born, the baby is taking through the birth canal bacteria into its mouth--baby's mouth is open, and then when the baby's head crowns, it's very common that a little bit of poo is pushed out. Fascinatingly, within an instant this bacteria can get to baby. We've got an ecosystem and a huge portion of your poo is bacteria, right? I forget exactly the weight, but it's a huge percentage. So when you're pooping out that bacteria, it's making its way to the baby, and so that is the magic of the human body. The body wants to heal itself and wants to get better, and so the lactobacilli makes its way to where it needs to do that. But you've got to be releasing or pooping out the right bacteria, so it can make its journey there.

29:47 DS: Ye, it's the proximity where the bugs can travel. I think Kiran, in the podcast I did with him, talked a lot about how during the birth process that is part of how the babies get colonized.

30:09 DS: There are no mistakes in nature, right?

30:12 AH: Absolutely.

30:15 DS: So, what strains of probiotics? If you have just a few to rattle off if somebody was trying to improve their vaginal flora to get pregnant, are there any strains of probiotics that somebody should consider?

30:31 AH: The ones you want are the lactobacilli that naturally help the vaginal tract. These are the ones that we put in our women's health probiotic, those strains are L fermentum... Sorry, L stands for lactobacillus. So lactobacillus fermentum, lactobacillus reuteri, lactobacillus brevis, lactobacillus plantarum and lactobacillus gasseri. I know it's a long list. Those are all strains that naturally help the vaginal tract, they're going to help produce the lactic acid, to get that pH level where it needs to be, so that you're less likely to get these infections, and to help make sure the vaginal tract is able to go through these cycles of acidic to alkaline to acidic to really create the best environment to get pregnant.

31:24 DS: Those are great tips for if you're trying to have a child, and are just good preconception care--look at your microbiome and look at these probiotics. I guess, fast forward, do you have any suggestions for how to prevent group B strep from thriving in the vaginal tract, or ideas for if

somebody is group B strep positive--are there alternatives other than the IV antibiotics that are standard of care now?

31:53 AH: Yes, great question. I'm so glad you asked it because it's so personal to me. They have done studies on lactobacilli strains, the ones that I was talking about, and have seen that if those are present, even if you've already gotten a diagnosis of group B strep positive, it can be reversed within a matter of a few weeks. The most important thing you want to do while you're pregnant is to be creating a very healthy gut microbiome and also vaginal tract biome for baby, because this is when you're going to pass it on, to pass your microbiome on to baby with all that DNA and everything. Specifically with group B strep, just know that they're going to test you at 36 weeks. You really want to be making sure that you're taking a great colic probiotic, and there are studies that show that this can reverse or even prevent it. The other thing too is, and I like to apparently have babies that come late--I was tested a little bit before 36 weeks this time because we just had a second baby.

32:57 DS: Oh, congratulations.

32:58 AH: Thank you so much. And then they test you the second time six weeks later, and I hit that window and this time, I was taking probiotics the whole time, and we were negative both times. I was like, "Yeah, give me the test. It's going to come back negative." I know every child is different, but I can't tell you what a different experience this was. No colic, no screaming, no crying. And, my son's five, so he's not going to be listening to this, he has just the sweetest demeanor. He's great and amazing. He

actually hasn't had any antibiotics now since the day he was born, which were the ones he got from me, which has been great. But with our little girl, this time, it was just a totally different experience. I highly encourage you if you're pregnant to be building up your microbiome, because it's an awesome gift that you can give your baby.

33:58 DS: And if you've had a positive before, that doesn't mean that you're always going to have a positive result.

34:09 AH: Absolutely.

34:09 DS: That's really empowering for people to hear.

34:12 AH: Absolutely, and the other thing I want to mention is that I had coffee with somebody today who's got four kids and he told me that his wife was given antibiotics, even though she tested negative on the third child, just because they said in previous births that she was positive, which is crazy. Just like they test you every six weeks, the flora can change that fast. So for them to be getting antibiotics because two years ago, with the previous child she was positive, even though she tested negative this time, is crazy. So you've got to be your own advocate. Get educated, and ask those right questions, because otherwise they might be giving you penicillin when it's not at all necessary.

34:51 DS: That's crazy. Also we have pre-conception, and then while you're pregnant and then nursing is such a huge part of establishing our

babies' microbiome and the health of their digestive track. And so, how do probiotics tie into nursing?

35:15 AH: That's huge. It's really important to take probiotics while nursing. Breast milk is fascinating and they really don't fully understand it, but they do understand a lot and they're learning more all the time. One of the things that they didn't understand was that there's a huge amount of HMOs, they're called, human milk oligosaccharides, that are produced in mom's milk, and they were like, "Why is so much energy being used to create this portion of breast milk?" They knew that these oligosaccharides can't be digested by baby. Not that many years ago, I can't tell you exactly, but within the last 20 years, maybe even less, they realized that these HMOs, these human milk oligosaccharides are like a sugar, they are there to feed the bacteria in baby's gut. That's fascinating because for such a huge portion of breast milk to just be feeding the bacteria, obviously, there is something amazing going on...

36:26 AH: There's a great book which I love called, 'I Contain Multitudes', and it's by guy named Ed Yong, and if you're a busy mom breastfeeding, you probably don't have time to read the book, but he wrote a great article for the New Yorker, I think this is two years ago, called 'Breastfeeding The Microbiome'. Essentially what he found is that there's this one kind of super strain, called B infantis. If this strain is present in baby's gut and is fed by these HMOs, it does two, almost magical things, one is it releases a short-chain fatty acid that feeds the gut cells in the baby, and helps seal the lining of their tummies sooner. And then the second is it releases a specific acid that aids in brain development. If you think about sealing the lining of the

baby's tummy sooner, not leaving it permeable too long... You look at these skyrocketing rates with allergies and autoimmune where it's hard to tell between friend and foe all that kind of stuff, certainly having that strain and being fed by breast milk is going to have a major impact on creating the foundation for health.

37:43 AH: One of the scary things that he talks about in his book, and he might even mention it in the article too, is that they're doing studies and they found that only 30% of moms in the US have B infantis to pass on to baby. In the developing world, it's upward of 90%. He talks about in the book, they don't fully understand why, there's a couple of theories, one is we have a couple of generations of C-sections now, a lot of antibiotics, and we don't live in the environment that we're meant to live in, right? Very Aquarian, close to nature--instead we live in sanitized, urban environments and we're not exposed to the right bacteria. So it's very important to take probiotics when nursing, but also to make sure that baby has the right bacteria.

38:37 AH: We're not getting the great benefit of that breastfeeding if the baby doesn't have the right strains. The other super fascinating thing is that it can literally change, and moms will love this, the number of dirty diapers you get. A lot of times you'll see really runny diapers, and that's kind of like the breast milk going through baby's tummy but not getting digested. So it comes out a different color...

39:08 AH: It's a different color and it's like rapid fire, right? If you do have the right bacteria and it gets digested, you're gonna get a paste, a yellow

paste, thicker poo, which shows the baby's gut had time to digest all the amazing oligosaccharides and great stuff in mom's milk. And, everybody wants less diapers.

39:32 DS: I'm going to try that soon.

39:35 AH: The other thing here is, you do pass probiotics onto baby there. They've done studies. I think there's something like 700 different types of bacteria in breast milk...

39:45 DS: Wow.

39:46 AH: The benefits of breast milk are incredible, it does magic stuff. It really does lay this foundation for a healthier baby for the rest of their life.

40:02 DS: I know the skin on the breast has a microbiome, right?

40:13 AH: Yes.

40:13 DS: And our digestive track obviously, but also our lungs have a microbiome, our brain has a microbiome, our oral health, it's just bacteria. I love how you say 'Lovebug,' because with bacteria, definitely, there's a lot of fear around illness and disease, but we can also look at it and see that these are our allies. If we have the right balance of bugs, they can do the work for our immune system and keep us healthy. I think that still there's a lot of education that has to be done around that. It's not just about killing bugs, but we are restoring balance, right?

40:51 AH: Yes, exactly. Looking at it in a different way, bacteria help keep us healthy and they have forever.

40:58 DS: Absolutely. I could talk to you all day, I think, Ashley. But before we close, how can probiotics help with weight loss?

41:20 AH: Great question. It's not just weight loss, like post-baby. We all have struggled. We all know people that can eat anything they want and don't put on weight, right? Or hate people that can do that or vice versa, people that can work out all the time and eat really healthily, and then just can't shift weight, and it's obviously incredibly frustrating. What is clear and increasingly so, is that the bacteria in our guts have a huge impact on our metabolism. Not just way we digest food, but our metabolism, belly fat and really our ability to lose weight. There's incredible science with studies they've done on mice, where they'll have an obese mouse and they'll have a thin mouse, and they will transfer the gut bacteria from the obese mouse to the thin and vice versa, and not change diet, and the obese mouse gets thin and the thin mouse gets obese. It's just incredible. It has a huge impact.

42:40 AH: The other thing, too, to make sure people understand, is that bacteria feed on fibers, healthy fibers. And our diet, standard American diet, that we all have, it's just so lacking in these good fiber. So you don't want to just take a probiotic and think you're done. Really, your diet is going to have a huge impact on your gut health and can change it pretty quickly too. And so, essentially, what you want to do is create a healthy

microbiome and ecosystem down there, and make sure you're feeding it the right foods, and you will see a huge impact on your digestive health, and even your ability to lose weight.

43:22 DS: Great tips. I would love for you to just share a little bit more about where we can find your product line, and how we can learn more. Again, I will have to have you back on the podcast. This has just been such a wealth of information and you really dove deep into the science in creating this line, I can tell. I really appreciate you sharing your wealth of knowledge with us. I know that we're gonna be putting a link in the show notes to your products, but I would love for you to share more about LoveBug.

44:00 AH: Sure. Thanks, Christine. And I would love to come back on the show.

44:12 AH: Perfect. We have a product line for everyone in the family. Prenatal, the only staged program from birth to age four, builds baby's microbiome, everything out there is kind of symptom-related. We also have probiotics for older kids and adults. You can find us on our website, and we're sold in CVS and Target, and in Vitamin Shop, as well as in great grocers around the country like Fresh Time, ATB, and Harris Teeter. We'll be launching in Fred Meyer in, I think, a couple of weeks, and in Raley's as well. You can find us in those retailers, but also on our website and on Amazon.

45:00 DS: I think it's great that you're in a lot of popular commonplace stores. We don't have to go to a really specialty store, or go to a doctor's office. That this is very accessible. I think that's really great.

45:16 AH: Our pricing is very competitive. We're less than a dollar a day on everything. We worked really hard because we use patented strains and the best delivery technology, with organic cotton and glass bottles. I know what probiotics can do, and so, we wanted to be as accessible to everyone, because it can change people's lives. That was hugely important to me.

45:52 DS: I really admire that because I think there's so many great products out there. I love my industry of naturopathic medicine and all that I have access to, but it can be quite cost-prohibitive to some people. I think as we're changing the paradigm, making all of these information more accessible is huge.

46:08 AH: Sorry, Dr. Christine. I forgot one good partner. We just launched with them...Natural Partners.

46:15 DS: Oh, that's wonderful.

46:16 AH: We'll be up there in about two weeks.

46:18 DS: Awesome. We'll be sharing more and more about your work and your product line with my audience. If you didn't catch that, we'll have a link. I just so appreciate your time and your story. It's really admirable that

you shared your story and you created your product line. That shows a lot of strength of character on your part, plus being a mom. Gosh.

46:45 AH: Thank you so much. This has been such a pleasure and I'm such a huge fan of all the work you're doing and am incredibly grateful for that. Thank you so much for having me. It's been a blast. I do look forward to next time.

46:58 DS: I'll absolutely have you back. Thank you, Ashley.

47:02 AH: Thanks.

47:04 DS: Thank you for listening to the Spectrum of Health Podcast. I'm Dr. Christine Schaffner, and I hope you enjoyed our conversation today with Ashley Harris. If you want to learn more about LoveBug Probiotics, please check out the link in our show notes. And again, if you have any feedback or questions, please feel free to email us at info@drchristineschaffner.com. Thank you so much and have a beautiful day.