



**Transcript: #413 How to Help Your Kids Eat a Sugar Free Diet with Maria Emmerich**

**Wendy Myers:**

Hello everyone. I'm Wendy Myers. Welcome to the *Myers Detox Podcast*. Today we have my good friend, Maria Emmerich, on the show. She's going to be talking about sugar-free kids and how you can help your kids eat a sugar-free diet. It's simpler than you think. We're going to be talking about all the talk surrounding keto and why the diets today are high fat diets. It's not just a keto diet that's a high fat diet. We talk about how simple it can be to cook keto recipes. We're going to be talking about how the recipes in Maria Emmerich's new book, *Sugar-Free Kids*, are very easy to make. Kids can make the recipes also. Why it is important to teach our children to cook for themselves, to cook healthy foods and to teach them that eating healthy can taste really, really good.

**Wendy Myers:**

It's a gift that my father gave to me that really helped me throughout my life. I learned that salads and other types of food tasted really good. I may not have tried them otherwise, because I was a teenager and kids can be very addicted to fast food and sugar. We also talk about how the ketogenic diet can help with various conditions like dementia, epilepsy, cancers and things of that nature. It's not just for weight loss. We also talk about how prevalent and dangerous vegetable oils are. I think people don't realize that even if they're eating a really healthy diet with vegetables and healthy proteins, those can be absolutely soaked in inflammatory vegetable oils. These can actually replace the healthy fats in your brain cells and your fat cells, rendering your cells not able to work as well and hinders your metabolism.

**Wendy Myers:**

We also talk about caffeine, how caffeine can make you more insulin resistant, thwart any weight loss efforts and cause more cravings by causing a blood sugar rollercoaster throughout the day. A lot of people talk about the benefits of caffeine but there's always a downside as well. Lots of interesting tips and tricks on the show today.

**Wendy Myers:** I know you guys listening are concerned about your health when it comes to toxins so I created a quiz called [heavymetalsquiz.com](http://heavymetalsquiz.com). You can go there and it takes two seconds to take the quiz. It will give you your relative body burden of toxins. I think a lot of people can't afford heavy metals testing, they're not interested in doing it or they live in a remote corner of the earth where they're not able to do testing. I wanted to create this quiz to help you discover what your relative levels of toxins are based on some lifestyle questions. Once you complete the quiz, you get a free video series that answers a lot of your frequently asked questions about how to detox your body, how long it takes and some tips on how to detox your body. Go take it right now at [heavymetalsquiz.com](http://heavymetalsquiz.com).

**Wendy Myers:** Our guest today, Maria Emmerich, is a nutritionist who specializes in the ketogenic diet and exercise physiology. She struggled with her health and her weight throughout her childhood, which led her to become a passionate nutrition expert. Her goal is to help transform people's lives and help them start living again. Maria specializes in brain neurotransmitters and how food can increase mental wellness. Her expertise has sent her around the world speaking about ketogenic diets. She has cooked with Halle Berry and writes for Halle's website as well. She has a new book out called *Sugar-Free Kids*. She's got lots of bestselling books, I think even some New York Times bestselling books. You can learn more about Maria and her work at [ketomaria.com](http://ketomaria.com). Maria, thank you so much for coming on the show.

**Maria Emmerich:** Thank you, Wendy. It's an honor to be here. I'll never forget when we first met on the Low-Carb Cruise. I instantly just loved your spirit. You're just so happy and lovely to be around.

**Wendy Myers:** Yes, it is so funny. We were both speaking on Jimmy Moore's Low-Carb Cruise and it was my first speaking gig.

**Maria Emmerich:** Oh, was it?

**Wendy Myers:** It was my first one. I was so excited. That was nine years ago and it was great meeting you on that. That was an awesome experience. Tell us about yourself. You've had a big transformation in your life. Can you share your before and after, beginning the ketogenic diet, which you're a huge advocate of? You have lots of bestselling cookbooks. Why did you start eating keto?

**Maria Emmerich:** Well, when I was 16 years old, I was twice my size. I went to my family doctor because I wasn't feeling well. I knew some things were going off-kilter and I was told I had PCOS, which is basically a type II diabetes that affects female fertility. I was only 16 at that time. I also was given an antidepressant because I was pretty severely depressed. I was given an acid blocker because I had acid reflux really badly, and something for IBS, irritable bowel syndrome. At that young age of 16, here I am holding onto three prescriptions. I'm like, "oh my gosh". The doctor

said it was nothing I was doing wrong. It was the cards I was dealt. I kind of hate her now because even 25 years ago, that's how old I am, there wasn't Google. I quickly found that what caused PCOS was excess carbohydrates, sugar and caffeine.

**Maria Emmerich:** Wendy, I worked at a coffee shop where I would make the scones, the muffins and the cinnamon rolls before I'd go to high school. Then after school I would go back and we would close at about 5:00 PM and whatever didn't sell, I got to go home with. You can make damn sure I made extra cinnamon rolls that morning because I love them. That's what I was eating, just basically coffee, cinnamon rolls, scones and all of that.

**Wendy Myers:** That was the perfect recipe for PCOS, the exact recipe.

**Maria Emmerich:** Totally. I know a lot of people harp on me for this whole caffeine thing but when you look into it, that's a huge piece of hormonal imbalance. I had to get rid of it to heal myself. I didn't want to live off of chicken breasts and broccoli. I still don't. I just kind of experimented and started making some of my favorite things, differently, without carbohydrates or sugar. I was doing it for myself and my friends and what happened was we started adopting children. I met my husband when I was 17 and I was married before I could even drink alcohol legally.

**Maria Emmerich:** We started adopting children and he lost his job. Someone said, "Maria, why don't you put your recipes together in a cookbook to help raise money for your adoptions?" Honestly, it was the best thing because it gave me a reason to wake up, I was so sad. I just wanted these babies and it went gangbusters. Now Halle Berry has the books and it's just like, "holy Hannah", I just can't believe this has all happened just because people want to eat good food but they still want to feel good.

**Wendy Myers:** Yes. Tell us about that. Halle Berry wrote the forward of your last book. Can you talk about how you started working with her?

**Maria Emmerich:** What happened was, I think we were watching a cooking show with my kids. All of a sudden my phone just kept going crazy on Instagram, everybody was like, oh my gosh Halle Berry's talking about you on Instagram. I'm like, "what"? I had no idea. I just knew that she was a beautiful actress. I went there and I was like, "oh my gosh". I just said, "Thank you very much, very grateful for your support." I asked for her address and we just started talking that way and we wrote her thank you cards and that type of stuff. Then all of a sudden, she just said, "Hey, do you want to do some cooking videos together?" I'm like, "Ah yeah, I do." Sadly COVID happened and we had to do it virtually, but there's more stuff in the works that I can't legally talk about. I just said, "Hey, would you be willing to write the forward?" She's like, "Absolutely." She could be the biggest diva because she's accomplished so much and she's just the nicest person.

**Wendy Myers:** Oh yeah, I know. I had a girlfriend that used to style her and she said she's such a nice person. Super, super sweet. Talk to us about children and helping them to go sugar-free. Why do you think it's so important for parents to be a little bit more concerned with the amount of sugar that their children are consuming? It's just astronomical when you really start looking at the ingredients list and what kids are eating, the amount of sugar they're eating and how that affects their health is just frightening.

**Maria Emmerich:** Well, I don't know if you remember Little House on the Prairie? When I was little, we had one television in the house and it had two channels. We would watch Little House on the Prairie. It's about this family that lived on the prairie and Laura Ingalls Wilder got one piece of candy a year, on Christmas. Now we send these kids off to school with a bowl of cereal that's basically candy. Our bodies are never going to be able to handle that amount of sugar. Sadly my sugar addiction when I was a kid, caused a lot of what happened to me as a teenager. I'm grateful that I had to change my diet at 16, because my friends are in their forties now and they're like, "Help, Maria." You know what? It's really hard to change your old habits when you're 40 years old.

**Maria Emmerich:** You are in charge of your children's palate, let it be clear. I'm not a judgy person but when you see a two year old eating a McDonald's french fry, they don't even know how to say french fry. They don't know what that is until the parent introduces it to them, so why even introduce it to them? It's nothing but harmful vegetable oils and processed harmful products. To me, it's why not take life by the balls and change their fate. My son, one of his first foods was bone marrow. They were like bone marrow? I was like, it's a savory Jello. The honest truth is that's what it is. He still, to this day, doesn't have much of a sweet tooth. We'll make some naturally sweetened things. He is just like, eh. That's not his jam. When you grow up with a sucker in your mouth at age two, it's going to be a problem.

**Wendy Myers:** Yeah, absolutely. The amount of candy that I ate as a child was just unbelievable.

**Maria Emmerich:** Me too.

**Wendy Myers:** I was absolutely a sugar addict. I would literally eat spaghetti, bread and then have a dessert and a couple candy bars during the day, for a snack.

**Maria Emmerich:** Me too.

**Wendy Myers:** Then I'd have a pint of ice cream at night. I wondered why I struggled with candida and other things. I'd never had major health issues but just had a lot of funky stuff happening from extreme sugar intake. You've mentioned your children, one of them was eating bone marrow. Are your kids sugar-free? Are they on the keto diet?

**Maria Emmerich:** Yes. I'm not a short order cook. They eat what I make and they don't need to lose any weight. And the thing is, people think that keto is automatically for weight loss, and it's not. It's great for epilepsy seizures, autism, mood issues, focus, energy, all of these things. My kids, if I counted, I don't count but maybe they eat 30 grams of carbs a day. They have higher fat and higher protein for their growth. They love it. We don't do pasta, rice, sweet potatoes, potatoes or anything like that, but they love the food. I feel that they're going to be pioneers. I think that people are going to want to study them because their focus, their energy and their moods are just so much different. They'll be playing football on the beach and all the other kids will need to take a break, have a snack or lunch or whatever. They're like, "Come on guys." They just want to keep going all day. I'm really proud of them for being such pioneers and not wanting sugar.

**Wendy Myers:** You mentioned there are so many other applications, so many other health issues that would benefit from a keto diet. There's lots of research on dementia. We know that high blood sugar can contribute to different forms of dementia. There's so much research out there on cancer and how this helps various health conditions.

**Maria Emmerich:** I think people automatically think that you're going to lose weight on keto and that's not true. You could eat copious amounts of fat and gain weight and people do all the time. For weight loss, keto's different, but for children, getting enough protein, that's the most important thing. There's a leucine shift where kids need a lot of protein and then as we start aging, we need a lot more too. Just being aware of that, I think that's probably the biggest pitfall is people don't get enough protein on the keto diet. I'm trying to change that.

**Wendy Myers:** Can you talk about trying to convince people that this way of cooking really isn't that hard? I think some people with just cooking in general, they can get kind of intimidated by it, that it's a lot of work. What are your tips and thoughts on that?

**Maria Emmerich:** Well, I think today or yesterday was national fast food day. We kind of jokingly, my husband jumped in the car with one of the boys and I stayed home and cooked with the other son. He went to Chipotle because a lot of people do like Chipotle bowls, this keto Chipotle bowl. He went to Chipotle, which is only two miles away. He went at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, he did not wait in line and by the time he came home, we were finished eating. We were finished cooking, eating and we had leftovers for the next day. It was not faster to pick up" to go" food. It was not cheaper because it was about a fourth of the price and we used all organic products to cook. I think people have to realize it's not cheaper and it's not faster to eat takeout.

**Maria Emmerich:** I wrote three books last year. I am working every day, doing podcasts, working with clients and we homeschool the kids. There's not a moment to breathe and I still find time to prioritize food. I believe that since I do eat such quality food, I'm

able to accomplish everything that I am. If I did eat sugar, if I did eat all those cinnamon rolls, I do have a good cinnamon roll for you, but if I ate all the sugary cinnamon rolls, I wouldn't be able to accomplish what I do in a day. It's a win-win. Here's the thing, if you don't know how to cook, what I did is I got the slow cookers out.

**Maria Emmerich:** When I'm extremely busy, I get the slow cooker out and my kids are 11 and 12 now, they're old enough to help. They help clean up dinner while I prepare dinner for the next night. I fill up that slow cooker, put the shell in the fridge and in the morning you just take it out and turn it on. You come home to a delicious meal and it usually has leftovers. My kids love my Italian chili. It's completely dairy free. It tastes like pizza in a bowl, especially in the wintertime. Even here it's hot and we still just love that Italian chili. I'll make a quadruple batch and I put three huge things in the freezer so all I have to do is take it out. If you're single, I would say put it in individual portions and just take one out as you want. Bring it to work with you and you have a really great delicious bowl of soup.

**Maria Emmerich:** Those are my tricks. I batch cook a lot. I don't cook every day. A lot of it is kind of refurbishing things that I've made. We also really love fish and it takes five minutes to cook a piece of fish on a cast iron skillet. Then you throw that on some greens or whatever. I always have my sauces in the fridge. I probably have four or five sauces that we all really love, including my ketchup. I have an ambrosia sauce and there's a ginger coconut sauce that I love on fish. I have those sauces in the fridge so it's easy to make a piece of fish, throw it on some greens, throw some sauce on it and boom, you have an easy lunch in no time.

**Maria Emmerich:** You learn these things. I think we all get stuck and we eat the same dinners every week and the same breakfasts. You just have to kind of rotate them to make them healthier. That's why, I guess I'm so passionate about making recipes. I even have a Pop-Tart because I want people to see that whatever you think that you will miss, there's a recipe for you.

**Wendy Myers:** I saw that on your Facebook page, I saw that Pop-Tart recipe.

**Maria Emmerich:** It's not the easiest one.

**Wendy Myers:** I'm going to try that one because I was addicted to Pop-Tarts. I have eaten a lot of Pop-Tarts in my day.

**Maria Emmerich:** Have you tried them lately? Have you ever tried them as an adult and been like, "oh my gosh, these are cardboard"?

**Wendy Myers:** They taste like cardboard. They're really disgusting.

**Maria Emmerich:** Once you get into real food and you go back to that, it's like, "why did I think this was a jam because it's not good"?

**Wendy Myers:** Not at all. I would much rather have a bowl of papaya or some healthy food because your palate changes. It's not easy when you eat a lot of processed food, the standard American diet or fast food that kind of hijacks your taste buds. Once you start eating healthier food, you start craving that. I feel so good all the time eating freshly prepared foods and that's all I want. I don't want boxed food, it's disgusting. There's some people who struggle with keto a little bit. Are there any tips maybe for women for starting the keto diet if they've had trouble with a high fat diet? Any tips for women on doing the keto diet?

**Maria Emmerich:** I'll say the standard American diet's already high fat. We don't need to add any more fat to it. If your body's already high fat, you want to let your body use that fuel to make ketones but if you're eating a lot of dietary fat it can't. Don't think that you need to add butter to your coffee. I don't recommend coffee in general, but don't be doing that or eating fat bombs or things like that. Eat real food because the nutrients are not in the fat, they're in the protein. The animal protein has fat in it.

**Maria Emmerich:** Second of all, that's where the nutrients are. If you could compare, MCT oil is more processed and has less nutrients in it than cane sugar does, but people don't think of it that way. I do. Even butter has some vitamin A in it but if you put that compared to a piece of fish or even a steak, people don't realize the most nutrient dense food is a steak. If I put a plate of kale in front of you, or a plate of blueberries in front of you or a steak in front of you, most people don't realize the steak has the most nutrients out of all the other things.

**Wendy Myers:** I wrote an article called, *Is Red Meat a Superfood?* I got so much flak for that article, but it's true. It's true. It's a superfood.

**Maria Emmerich:** It is, it is. We got a lot of pushback because my kids don't really like vegetables. My parents were really judgy about it and this and that. My husband started, he's Mr. Scientist, making charts of where he compared all the different vegetables, all the different fruits and then the meats that my boys liked. Meat and then organ meat as a whole superfood, and then that ended up being in a book, but it just started to prove my parents wrong. We just wanted them to be like, don't worry about it. There's a lot of antinutrients in the vegetables, like oxalates but that was a whole other thing they didn't want to hear.

**Wendy Myers:** Let's talk about vegetable oils because you mentioned most people are eating a really high fat diet and vegetable oil is a huge component of so many people's diets. Even if they're eating vegetables or they're eating healthy foods, say even whole foods or at restaurants, they're usually drenched in vegetable oil. What's going on there? What's the problem?

**Maria Emmerich:** I talked to a chef at a very fancy restaurant and he said, "Maria, you'd be surprised that even at this fancy restaurant, about 90% of what people are ordering has vegetable oil in it or is made in vegetable oil." It's cheap. It's cheap

for a restaurant, it's cheap for food producers. What's sad is there's a lot of keto influencers that have hundreds of thousands of followers on Instagram and they have a louder voice than I do. They will do promotional posts for mayos that are made with soybean oil, cottonseed oil or canola oil. These things are really probably more harmful than sugar because vegetable oils change the structure of our cells, so they don't talk anymore very well. Then you can't handle the sugar bomb that comes with it. Most foods that you buy on the shelf are not just filled with sugar, they're filled with the vegetable oil so you're getting a double whammy.

**Maria Emmerich:** Vegetable oils are very inflammatory. They're basically like a plastic-type fat and they make your cells look like plastic. That's why they don't talk well anymore. They were subsidized in the 1970s and since then with heart disease, the lines are straight up and the obesity rate is straight up. If people try to argue, "oh they're not that big of a deal". I argue that they are. It was probably the last thing I cut out of my diet because you have the keto things that have mayo or ranch dressing or this and that. Why are those so bad? I'm traveling, why can't I have some mayo? Now I just won't even touch them.

**Wendy Myers:** Yes, I agree. It's just amazing when you start reading the labels of foods, the processed foods, soybean oil, cottonseed oil and they're hydrogenated, which make them shelf stable. They're just horrifying what they do to your body, so inflammatory. You want to cut out sugar but you have to work pretty hard to cut out the vegetable oil. You basically can't eat out unless it's a really high end restaurant and you're making sure they're using olive oil.

**Maria Emmerich:** We'll go to a steak place and make sure that they're grilling it or they don't brush it with the oils when they are grilling it. It is really hard, but my kids love sashimi, so we'll stick with that.

**Wendy Myers:** I like sushi when I go out too. What's your take on caffeine?

**Maria Emmerich:** That's the thing again, there's no judging. I was addicted to caffeine for many years and it was one of the last things I cut out of my life. Caffeine increases androgens and high androgens in a female body is what causes PCOS, polycystic ovarian syndrome. It causes hormonal imbalances and 90% of people that I'm sure you work with and that I work with, have sleep issues. They're not sleeping enough. They have anxiety and caffeine will cause more issues with that. On top of that, caffeine has been proven to make you less insulin sensitive. In this world of sugar bombs everywhere, we don't need that. That's causing more harm. Coffee is the most mold-containing food out there, if you call it a food because it's a drug. It has the most mold in it and my husband does have a lot of mold, so it's hard to detox that.

**Wendy Myers:** Caffeine just sends you on a blood sugar rollercoaster throughout the day. It raises your cortisol levels and then your blood sugar kind of insulin spikes. Then that crashes and then you're hungry. I think people don't realize.



- Maria Emmerich:** It causes cravings.
- Wendy Myers:** It sends them all this craving throughout the day and they end up eating a lot more food than they might normally, if they didn't have caffeine.
- Maria Emmerich:** I'm glad you brought that up because a lot of people, after I wrote about that and talked about it, some doctors did a YouTube video on CGMs, oh see my blood sugar didn't change. First of all, those CGMs are pretty inaccurate. Second of all, the proof is in the pudding. When you cut it out, so many people are like, "Oh my gosh, Maria, I lost four pounds this week and the only thing I changed was cutting out the caffeine. I no longer crave chocolate and that type of stuff." I guess I remember having one too many cups of coffee and then I felt like a guitar string that was too strung, like I was just going to pop at any moment. I didn't like that feeling. I like having energy but I like having this real energy that's not that shakyish type of feeling.
- Wendy Myers:** Yes, exactly. I think people get so used to that because their diet is so bad in the first place. Their body just isn't optimized at producing energy, so they look for it artificially. Tell us about your new book, what it's all about and where we can get it.
- Maria Emmerich:** It's *Sugar-Free Kids*, thank you for mentioning that Halle Berry did write the forward. There's a lot of recipes. Most cookbooks only have 100 recipes. I always pack more than 200, and my publisher is like, "No, no, no. It's going to be way too big of a book." You can find it on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, maybe some Targets will have it, but any bookstore will carry it. *Sugar-Free Kids* was a true labor of love. I think it's the best book I could put out there. I have a lot of people say, "I don't even have kids. This is my favorite book of yours." They're very simple recipes and the labels on each recipe say if a little kid could make it by themselves, if they should have a parent's help or it should be parent-led, but most of them can be made by my kids.
- Maria Emmerich:** I tested them. I have recipe testers with little kids that have done it themselves. They're kid classic favorites. Everything that you could think of under the sun is in there. There's little baseball cupcakes but there's also your favorite grilled cheese and tomato soup. I put that in. I did a holiday chapter. That's my favorite chapter because I think that during the holidays, we all crave certain things. We have memories of different holidays where I made spaghetti and meatballs with Zoodles and there's spaghetti and eyeballs for Halloween. With an olive you make a little eyeball and it looks really cute. With deviled eggs, I made deviled eggs into little owls because we eat with our eyes yet they're very simple little additions to make it fun food and it's healthy.
- Wendy Myers:** I think that's such a great gift to give to your children and also to teach them how to cook healthy food. That's what my dad did for me. It made me realize that healthy food does really taste good. Salads can taste really, really good. I

learned how to cook and I learned how to eat healthy food. It's just one of the best gifts that you can give your children and having a book like your *Sugar-Free Kids* to teach them that healthy food does taste really, really good. It's really simple and easy to make and that sets them on a life path for success with their health.

**Maria Emmerich:** Thank you very much. In the beginning, I hated saying it's just a cookbook because it's not just a cookbook. The whole beginning is very easy to read, almost like a comic book about where sugar's hidden, where the nutrients are in food, how to make easy recipes, how to batch cook and what freezes easily. It's a really great little comic book introduction for you.

**Wendy Myers:** Fantastic. Tell us about your website and where we can find you, social media, all that stuff.

**Maria Emmerich:** I have a website. If you go to [ketomaria.com](http://ketomaria.com), there's thousands of free recipes there because I know we had a very terrible job loss and if you couldn't afford to buy a book you could always ask your library to buy it, and then it's a win-win. The library gets it, you get to use it but again, there's thousands of free recipes at [ketomaria.com](http://ketomaria.com). There's a little search button, you could search kids recipes, you could search protein or whatever, Thanksgiving recipes, Christmas recipes, whatever you're looking for, we have a ton for you there.

**Maria Emmerich:** You can find me on YouTube where I cook with my kids because I want people to see how I usually step back and they do the cooking. I want people to see just how easy some of these recipes are. When I first wrote the book, *The Ketogenic Cookbook*, I could handle constructive criticism and what people said was, "They're good recipes but they're too hard." I didn't have kids then. Now that I have kids, I understand people want fast, easy and delicious food. That's what I'm all about now. My recipes have gotten much, much easier but if you want to check out the bottom of [ketomaria.com](http://ketomaria.com), you can check us out on YouTube for cooking the recipes, too.

**Wendy Myers:** Fantastic. Well, Maria, thank you so much for coming on the show. I love your work. I've been a fan since I first met you on a Low-Carb Cruise.

**Maria Emmerich:** I've been a fan of yours too.

**Wendy Myers:** You always have beautiful cookbooks. You have beautiful photos in them. They're just so well done. I highly, highly recommend them for anyone that's looking to enjoy some of the benefits of the ketogenic diet. Thanks for coming on and I'll talk to you soon.

**Maria Emmerich:** Have a great day. Thank you so much.

**Wendy Myers:** Everyone, thanks for joining the *Myers Detox Podcast* where I talk about all different types of subjects related to your health. When you're looking at

detoxification, you've got to get the garbage out of your diet. You need to start eating organic, start thinking about eating a little bit lower carbohydrate and take some of the stress off your liver so it can optimize detoxification. Diet is a huge part of the conversation when it comes to detoxification. Thanks for tuning in. You deserve to feel good so I hope you picked up some tips in this podcast, to help you enjoy the health that you deserve. Talk to you next week.