Naturepedic - Organic Healthy Sleep for the Whole Family

Episode 294 · August 2, 2022 · with Arin Schultz

IN THIS EPISODE

Babies spend 12 to 14 hours a day with their faces pressed into a crib mattress, breathing in whatever comes out of it — so what is actually inside one? Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC sits down with Arin Schultz, father of four and Naturepedic's head of sales and marketing, who left the metals industry eight years ago for an organic mattress company and says the education since has changed him as a person and a parent. Arin walks through how a traditional crib mattress is made: a vinyl waterproof cover softened with phthalates, the plasticizer that off-gasses as the vinyl cracks with age, and polyurethane foam inside, laden with flame-retardant chemicals — the same phthalates regulators removed from new cars but not from babies' mattresses. Then he explains how Naturepedic engineered its way around all of it, from non-GMO sugar-cane waterproofing with no phthalates at all to an organic-cotton design that passes flammability tests without chemical flame retardants, glues, or adhesives, made in a GOTS-certified factory where about 80 percent of the workforce is Amish. After the break, Arin turns to the lineup itself — lightweight versus coil crib mattresses, breathable and two-stage models, a potty-training toddler bed, and an adult mattress you can unzip and re-layer when pregnancy changes how you sleep.

About this transcript: *This transcript was created with AI-assisted transcription and reviewed by our team. It may not be 100% accurate — names, medical terms, and phrasing can occasionally be mis-transcribed. For exact wording, please listen to the episode audio.*

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the informed pregnancy and parenting podcast. I'm your host. Dr. Elliott Berlin today I'm happy to be speaking with father of four and director of sales and marketing for an organic mattress company Called Naturepedic. He's gonna answer all my burning mattress questions Including why they don't include flame retardant in their mattresses and give us a peek into some of the most popular features of Naturepedic's organic crib and adult mattresses Aaron Schultz. Welcome to the podcast. Thanks for having me this morning It's my pleasure. Okay, so I want to talk about mattresses, especially since for babies They spend so much time laying with their face sucking in whatever's in there, but also chemicals in general

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think we have a poor understanding of the number of chemicals that are used that are brought into our homes and what Kind of effects they can have on our health even as adults Especially as influential little babies with their nervous systems developing their immune systems developing But before we get to all that let's start at the beginning. What's your background professional and how did you come to this line of work?

ARIN SCHULTZ: Well, I've been here in naturepedic for around eight years now, and I just turned 39 and happy birthday. Thank you Thank you. I don't feel 39 but you know who feels their age in that given time anyway, either way. Yeah So at 31 I thought you know an organic company like that sounds pretty cool You know my wife and I kind of dabbled a little bit at the time So, you know I jumped right and I used to be in the metals industry So it's a far cry from what I used to do to coming into this and after meeting doctors such as yourselves and scientists and advocacy groups and you know working with 1% of the planet and everything it is Far and above different for me as a person and a parent eight years later of everything

ARIN SCHULTZ: I know now the education that I've gotten in the last eight years is better than anything I could have gotten in my entire life so that's why I make it a mission of you know, my role here in naturepedic not only to Sell the product but also to educate parents to making more informed decisions for themselves for their kids You know because that's really what it's all about

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: so and that's what informed pregnancy and parenting is all about and We're so grateful for your support of our mission which is in line with yours One thing I could say is it sounds awful to sleep on a metal mattress, so I'm glad that you switched

ARIN SCHULTZ: It was very painful. Yes Much more comfortable these days

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Alright, so at naturepedic you're director of sales and marketing but like every company, especially You know smaller homie like companies you probably have more jobs than most

ARIN SCHULTZ: Yeah, you know being here for years. I just wanted to get my hands in everything. So SARS just sales and marketing I'm also in R&D for any new products. We're coming out with Educating parents that we're you know, trying to get our message on about the only thing I don't do around here is maybe clean The toilets, but if they ask me I probably give it a hand. So yeah, give it time. Give it time

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And your parents you have kids I do yeah

ARIN SCHULTZ: I have four boys, you know age range from 15 all the way down to about 18 months now Yeah, well that sounds like a lot of energy it is, you know, I'm probably immune to it now But I imagine anyone coming into our house. It just smells like an armpit and feet You know and my poor wife she's got her own bathroom. We give that to her. That's her safe space You know, so If we had a girl right now, I don't know, I knew if this would manage, uh, we probably should have a rat's nest for hair and, uh, you know, who knows how to make a ponytail.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So as a parent switching from metals to organics, has that influenced your parenting style?

ARIN SCHULTZ: Oh, a hundred percent. You know, it's not just the chemical side of stuff either. It's just trying to be an organic company. We obviously care about the environment. So just trying to get my kids outside more and being more ethical and sustainable. Uh, you know, my wife and I lead a pretty plastic free life, which, you know, I will wholeheartedly say I did not buy into right away. I dragged my feet, but you know, we try and part that into our kids. You know, you try and leave the world a little bit better than you found it. And hopefully we, you know, raise good humans.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So what a great mission. All right. Let's take a little break. When we come back, I want to find out about naturopedic, about the mission of naturopedic and get into kind of this specific details of what kind of things are normally produced in a mattress and how you've been able to navigate around them. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the podcast. We are talking to Aaron Schultz from nature PD. All right. I want to get into the nuts and bolts and nitty gritty of what actually goes into the making of a mattress in general, and especially crib matches for little kids and how things have evolved and become better over time. So we all know that when you bring home a baby, they're going to stick their face into whatever they're sleeping on

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: for 12 hours a day, 14 hours a day. And they're going to be sucking in whatever's coming out of that mattress. What normally goes into a crib mattress?

ARIN SCHULTZ: Well, you know, in terms of making a crib mattress, a traditional one, obviously you want that crib mattress to be waterproof, baby spit up, they have blowouts, you know, I have four kids, so I'm loving the death though. But, you know, again, accidents are going to happen. My 18 month old, he had the stomach flu this past week and that poor baby is just, you know, throwing up everywhere. And again, mattress wasn't waterproof, it's going to go inside and then you're going to, you know, have to worry about like mold growing and that baby breathing that in. So again, mattress needs to be waterproof. So some traditional ways to waterproof crib mattress are with vinyl. And for those who aren't aware of what vinyl is, is

ARIN SCHULTZ: that hard plastic PVC pipe that you have in your house. They actually have a chemical called phthalates to it and phthalates are a plasticizer and it makes that hard PVC soft. And if you ever see a really old crib mattress where it starts to crack in the corners, that's those phthalates that their life is coming to an end in terms of off gassing and everything else. So your baby is breathing those in their skin is touching it. And phthalates are bad because they're actually known to cause reproductive problems in boys and their endocrine disruptors as well. When that new car smell that everyone knows and loves those phthalates, they don't do that anymore because this is why the world is a crazy place. They recognize that

ARIN SCHULTZ: phthalates are bad and you shouldn't be breathing them in. So they stopped putting them inside of new cars, but they haven't stopped putting them around babies and mattresses. Yes. So, you know, it's crazy to me that that's like one is okay. And one is not.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So I just had a great idea. We should turn the back seat of the car into a mattress. I wouldn't drive it, but it's not the eighties anymore. Anyway, I'm not taking that one to charting. So if the outside is final, so that hard PVC pipe softened up with phthalates. So the purpose of that is so that it would be waterproof.

ARIN SCHULTZ: Correct. Yeah. Again, that water running through your house, that PVC pipe against waterproof water is not going to leak out. If there's a good seal, you know, nothing's going to get into that mattress. If that vinyl is on that mattress.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So how can you waterproof a mattress without that?

ARIN SCHULTZ: So in Naturepedic, we're actually very proud of this. We're the only crib mattress manufacturer to use this process is we start with non-GMO sugar cane as part of our base waterproofing. It's not the sole material that we have in our waterproofing. Cause you know, unfortunately there's not a hundred percent all natural way to waterproof a mattress at all, but we're constantly reinventing. As soon as, you know, we were able to get organic sugar cane to use on our waterproofing, we're going to use it. We're always trying to make ourselves better. It's the joy of being owned by three engineers. So they constantly pick everything apart and put it back together. And we're always trying to improve.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So with the sugar cane process, you don't use phthalates.

ARIN SCHULTZ: Correct. Yeah. No phthalates whatsoever in our product.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, that's cool. I'd probably use my mattress.

ARIN SCHULTZ: I don't know if it's sweet or not. I've never tasted it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So I see a little TikTok video going. All right. So that's the outside of the mattress. What's on the inside?

ARIN SCHULTZ: So the inside is not any better. You know, some traditional materials that they use for crib mattresses are, you know, again, there's $50 ones and there's $500 ones. There's over 140 plus crib mattresses on the market. So those cheaper ones, they have to use cheaper materials to keep their costs down. So a lot of times you will find cardboard inside of those crib mattresses and then a fabric called a shoddy pad. And what a shoddy pad is, is basically the sweepings of textile floors and they mash that into a mat and they stick that inside of crib mattresses. And then obviously with those, some of the cheaper ones too, they will use polyurethane foam, which have flame retardant chemicals in them, on them,

ARIN SCHULTZ: around them, anywhere you can find on polyurethane foam, you will find flame retardant chemicals. And why those are bad and you should avoid it all costs is they are neurological disruptors and can cause reproductive problems. And they're also known to cause cancer. So definitely not something you want to run around your baby.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: This is certainly not, but you know, I said in the introduction also like my burning questions about mattresses and why you don't use flame retardants. But I mean, the logical assumption is we do want the mattress not to go up in flames, if God forbid it was exposed. So isn't it counterintuitive to not use flame retardant?

ARIN SCHULTZ: Again, being owned by three engineers, we did not want to use flame retardant chemicals. We didn't want to use polyurethane foam. So we engineers this thing to the nth degree where our overall design allows us to pass all those flammability tests, same as any of those flame

retardant riddled chemical curb mattresses without using any of those chemicals. So, you know, organic cotton by nature, it has a slow burn, it does not ignite like polyurethane foam does. You know, the fire safety council actually calls polyurethane foam solid gasoline. An average queen size mattress has anywhere between 20 and 25 gallons of crude oil into making that mattress. So, you know, I would say on average, maybe a

ARIN SCHULTZ: curb mattress would have, you know, two to three gallons of crude oil to go into making that foam curb mattress.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, my petroleum reserve.

ARIN SCHULTZ: Yeah, just start stocking on queen size mattresses.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Saving for a rainy day. Okay, so you're saying you don't really need chemical flame retardants because the materials of the organic cotton just doesn't go up in flames by nature.

ARIN SCHULTZ: And it's not the only reason I mean, obviously, we're not adding any chemicals whatsoever into our product. It's kind of the way things are tucked in and heat sealed here because we don't use any glues or adhesives in our production either. You know, some organic mattresses are able to, we just choose not to, you know, our big thing around here is we don't compromise. If something can be made cheaper and faster, we just won't do it. So, you know, again, the overall construction plus the materials that we use that don't ignite allow us to pass a flammability test.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Are there other types of hurdles that you've had to overcome to make a better mattress?

ARIN SCHULTZ: You know, again, the waterproofing, obviously, we tackled that from a hygienic perspective and then the chemical perspective as well. We definitely wanted to go to the nth degree there. You know, organic cotton, pretty much one of the best materials you could possibly use. It's not treated with any pesticides or herbicides or insecticides. Not only is our product got certified, which is the global organic textile standard, our entire factory got certified. And what that means is they come to our factory three times a year and what they do is they pull a crib mattress off the shelf and we have to tell them what farm that cotton came from and what crop that cotton came from. And they track that all the way through.

ARIN SCHULTZ: There's a lot of transparency and record keeping along the way to make sure that none of those things were, you know, added in there in terms of insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, whatever it might be, those are going to occur mattresses.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it sounds like it would be so fun to be one of those people that gets to come to your factory and check out all the cool things going on in there. I just picture cloudy buckets of organic cotton.

ARIN SCHULTZ: So a little known fact about Naturepedic is about 80 percent of our workforce is also Amish. So not only are you getting a certified organic product, you're also getting an Amish made product as well. So we're really trying to, you know, it's kind of like organic food where, you know, you

can tell it's organic. Like, I know I feel healthy, but it tastes like crap, you know, but we didn't want to do that with our crib mattresses. So, you know, we didn't want to jeopardize quality and everything to just to be organic. We wanted you to get an organic product and to be happy about that decision and to not have any doubts that you bought the best product possible. So Barry, our owner, actually, he started the first organic co-op in the 70s in

ARIN SCHULTZ: Cleveland here and the Amish by nature don't really use a lot of chemicals in growing any of their produce or anything like that. So starting that co-op, he started getting produce from Amish farmers in around the greater Cleveland area. And when we started Naturepedic, we needed labor. So he went some of his Amish friends that he had from the co-op and, you know, they had all their kids ready to go. And that's how we got started. And, you know, it's interesting, you know, I'm kind of immune to it now. Just like, I know them and their kids and I've been here for eight years and, you know, anyone else new coming in who aren't around the Amish. It's like their eyes just light up with, you know, seeing because it's a

ARIN SCHULTZ: very, I don't want to say simple process because that takes away from like how much thought went into our product. But, you know, there's all these Amish mothers and daughters out there and sewing machines and there's Amish men lugging materials around and everything like that. So it's very quaint. They're also putting out a really, really good product.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I mean that superior craftsmanship that they're famous for.

ARIN SCHULTZ: Yeah. And that's, you know, it definitely extends to our crew mattresses as well.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. You guys are not only, I mean, you've grown since that day that Barry went into a store looking for a mattress for the grandchild. Things have grown substantially. Let's take a little break. When I come back, we'll find out what kind of products you have and what's in development. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the informed pregnancy podcast. We're talking to Aaron Schultz from Naturepedic. Okay. So what I've learned personally is my house is filled with chemicals and slowly over time, we've been trying to replace things that are known to be toxic with things that are more natural. And when it comes to a mattress, especially a crib mattress, what I've learned today from you Aaron is that the outside of mattresses traditionally

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: was made with vinyl, which uses a harsh chemical to soften the hard PVC pipe and make it so that you can flex it around the mattress and give it some waterproofing. So it had a purpose, but it's also using chemicals known to be harmful that also off gas over time. And you can see that happen when the vinyl starts to become hard again and starts to crack, that's the phthalates coming out of it. And then on the inside, the polyurethane foam, which, you know, in my case might be a good investment to stock up on petroleum is also laden with chemicals. And especially the amount of flame retardant needed to prevent that from lighting up explosively should it come in contact with a flame.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you found innovative processes to give you those benefits like waterproofing and support without needing to add all those chemicals to it. And it's not just one mattress. You have several different products. What do you have for babies?

ARIN SCHULTZ: So, you know, the age old question for parents anymore is lightweight versus coil, and that's one of the biggest decisions they're trying to make. and I will tell you, it's really a matter of preference. There's really no wrong answer there necessarily. Babies are more discerning than you think they are, you know, but we really do try and achieve an atropedic as a firm flat surface for any of our models. It's great for bone development and to prevent flathead and also to prevent those potential rollovers too. So mini crib mattresses, we came out with one a couple years ago, you know, they're becoming more and more in the lexicon of crib mattress discussion. About a third of all crib mattresses

ARIN SCHULTZ: now are mini crib mattresses. It really helps save a little more space in that nursery. If you have an apartment or condo or whatever it might be. So ours is actually breathable and we'll get into that a little bit more. But what's cool about our breathable crib mattress is that the cover actually comes off and goes right in the wash. So if you have one of those accidents, it's really nice because you also get that nice waterproof crib mattress underneath, but that breathable crib mattress pad is also waterproof as well. So we have that one. And then we have the whole lineup from single stage, which single stage is pretty much just for infants. It doesn't matter what side it is necessarily. It's just designed for infants.

ARIN SCHULTZ: And then we have two stage models as well. One side's for infant, one side is for toddler. And we put the tag on the bottom of the mattress to indicate which side is which, you know, that way you take all the guesswork and that toddler side just has a little more cushion in it. That makes it a little bit softer for them so they can sleep better at

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: night. Oh, fantastic. And why would someone get one or the other?

ARIN SCHULTZ: You know, we have had both in our house, again with four kids, and I will tell you, you know, the lightweight ones are nice for a mom or dad for that matter, who might be less than five foot two. You know, they don't make drop down cribs anymore. So you can imagine picking up a traditional inner spring crib mattress, which is anywhere between 20 and 25 pounds and cut to three o'clock in the morning when that baby threw up on everything and around in its particular area. And you have to change out sheets, change out pads, everything else. Trying to lug out this 25 pound mattress three in the morning isn't the most ideal thing in the world. So that's why we have our lightweight models where they still

ARIN SCHULTZ: have that same great integrity that the inner springs do. They hold up to all that toddler abuse. They make it through two or three kids, you know, but again, it makes for that easier sheet changing and stuff like that. So again, it's really a matter of preference for what you might want for your baby. Our lightweight models are also really nice. Again, three engineers, we didn't want to give up the edge support that an inner spring would have. So our edges are actually reinforced on all of our lightweight models. So when that baby starts standing up, jumping up and down on that crib and everything, it's not going to squish down like additional lightweight model will do and have the potential like their little legs or

ARIN SCHULTZ: arms or whatever to tuck underneath that mattress and allow for them to get trapped or hurt.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And then as they get bigger, are there toddler versions?

ARIN SCHULTZ: Yeah, we do have a big kids beds. Again, I'm very proud of our crib mattresses, but I really like our toddler mattress because we have one of the only specifically designed mattresses for potty training children. My three-year-old sleeps on it. I can't tell you how many times that thing's been saved on that waterproof side. So one side is waterproof, like our traditional crib mattresses are, and then one side is quilted. So when they get done potty training, you can actually flip that mattress over and it's quilted on that side, just like a traditional mattress would be for them. It's great for any of those accidents that your kid has to throw at that mattress between throw up or wetting the bed, whatever kid has to throw at

ARIN SCHULTZ: it, that mattress can be able to take it and it's not going to get ruined. My wife and I had a friend of ours a couple of years ago who gave us a bed and the mattress was still with it. And I can't tell you how gross that mattress was from that kid. And we obviously did not use it, but that mattress is ruined that you are not getting that out. If something is in that mattress, it is staying in there forever. You know, it kind of sounds like also with the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: quality that you're talking about, that you could save them and use them for more than one kid.

ARIN SCHULTZ: Correct. Yeah. I mean, it definitely stands the test of time, especially when you have those kids that are a little bit farther apart in age where they can kind of just gradually move up to the next level. We have our verse and neutropedic crib mattress is the next step up above the potty training one. And what's cool about that mattress is it has an independent coil system, kind of like our adult beds do. So if you happen to fall asleep, reading with them, roll out of bed and it's not going to have that motion transfer and potentially wake them up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's really cool. Cause I think I'm not alone in the fact that I usually fell asleep before they did. Yeah. Many a times my wife, I'll feel a hand on my foot trying to wake me up from hitting our son. And then adult. Now you have adult options. These amazing mattresses

ARIN SCHULTZ: are not just for kids. Yeah. You know, it really makes my job easy of selling our products. We've really come up with some really cool designs. It's not just organic for the sake of being organic. We really wanted comfort to be an option as well for people who wanted to make a better decision for, you know, their sleep and our EOS mattress. We actually won good housekeeping's best sustainable mattress of 2021 for our pillow top design. design. And we actually won the best bedding award for good housekeeping for 2022 for our classic design of that Eos mattress. And what is special about that mattress is if you like firm on your side, but your partner likes plush on theirs, the whole mattress actually

ARIN SCHULTZ: unzips and you can do layer swapping. So, you know, it's saved a lot of marriages. Choose who gets what side or whatever it might be. You both get your own side. You don't have to sleep in separate bedrooms. And what's cool about it too, you know, if I was having four kids, I've watched my wife be pregnant a lot. And what ends up happening is she used to build this like little nest of pillows. It was the only way to like make her back feel better the pregnancy for it. Yes. And the body pillow and everything really her own little cocoon over there. And what's cool about this mattress

is if you traditionally like sleeping in a firm mattress, but then you get pregnant, you're going to

ARIN SCHULTZ: want a softer sleeping surface. Hence the nest or the cocoon you're going to build with your pillows. So you can actually unzip that mattress and swap out that latex or micro coil layer with a softer feel to it while you're pregnant. And then after you give birth, you can actually swap back in your bed again. Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. You know, one of the number one things people talk about discomforts of the second and especially third trimester is sleeping where they're either not used to sleeping on their side or not used to sleeping on their side with extra weight on their frame and the hips just get so achy and sore pushing into that firm mattress. So I've been sort of dreaming up some kind of solution for it, but it sounds like you and your three engineers beat me to it. That's how it usually goes. You have your million dollar idea and it came out like three years ago. Okay. This is great information. It sounds like you have an amazing product line. Where can people find Major Pedic?

ARIN SCHULTZ: So we're in pretty much every major retailer online right now. You know, all of our crib mattresses you can find with BabyList, Target, Pottery Barn, Bye Bye Baby, and you know, our kids beds. If you want to see them, touch them, feel them. They're in all of the Pottery Barn kids stores and all of the Creighton kids stores. And then we also have our own major pedic stores across North America. We have 21 stores and counting. If you want to go to our website, we have a find a store page and just type in your address. And, you know, we're in L.A., we're in New York, we're in Texas, Florida. So we have quite a lot of spaces out there that you can choose from.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's fabulous. I think it's great to be able to go touch and feel. And especially if you can literally now with the information that you've been given here, you can go in and feel the more traditional types of mattress and the major pedic style mattress. And you literally feel the difference and maybe even smell the difference. And you guys have a generous special offer for our audience. They can go to your website, naturepedic.com, and using the code BERLIN20 save 20% off site wide. That's huge. Thank you.

ARIN SCHULTZ: Yeah, it's tough out there. I'm sure you guys being in California probably have a $80 a gallon gas at this point. You know, we're trying to make it a little bit easier. We don't want to have people do is compromise. So we're tightening our belts a little bit to pass the savings off to the consumer.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Really grateful for you guys and all the innovations for making this staple of the house better, safer, healthier, and now more affordable. Again, if you visit naturepedic.com, use the code BERLIN20 and you save 20% off site wide. Aaron, thank you so much for joining me today.

ARIN SCHULTZ: No, it was great to be here.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I'm going to go check you out for now on the socials that you already have. But once it's up, I'm going to check out TikTok. It'll be my first TikTok experience. And at home, thanks for listening to us. If you want to connect and find more important pregnancy and parenting related information, visit our website. We have a cool blog and documentaries and more. It's

Enjoying the Informed Pregnancy Podcast?

Visit us at **informedpregnancy.com** for episodes, articles, and resources for pregnancy, birth, and beyond.

Want more? Subscribe to **Informed Pregnancy+** at **informedpregnancy.tv** for films, series, and exclusive content.