**The Five-Second Rule**

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| 12345678910111213141516171819202122232425262728 | You have been looking forward to eating that last chocolate chip cookie all day. There it is on the plate, looking sweet and chewy and delicious. You get it from the plate. You bring it to your mouth. And then … just as you are about to take a bite … you drop it on the floor! You remember the five-second rule and pick it up right away. According to the five-second rule, if you drop food on the floor, it is still safe to eat as long as you pick it up within five seconds. Although many people who have dropped their cookies would love for this to be a scientific fact, sadly, it is just a myth.Scientists from Clemson University in South Carolina tested the five-second rule in 2007. First, they covered three different floor surfaces with Salmonella bacteria. Salmonella, which is often found on raw chicken, is a major cause of food poisoning. After coating the floors in Salmonella, they dropped bologna sandwiches on these contaminated surfaces. Finally, they measured the amount of bacteria on the food.The scientists discovered that food that had been on the floor for just five seconds could have up to 8,000 bacteria on it. Food that was left for one minute had ten times that amount—up to 80,000 bacteria. Because you can get food poisoning from as few as ten Salmonella bacteria, even a small amount of Salmonella can be dangerous. This means that the five-second rule is simply not true.The type of food you have dropped can also affect the number of bacteria on the food. Food with a higher water content, such as cooked pasta or sliced fruit, pick up a larger quantity of bacteria.So what does this mean for your dropped chocolate chip cookie? If you dropped it outside on the sidewalk, the five-second rule might keep you safe. However, if you dipped it in milk first and *then*dropped it in your kitchen or bathroom, you should probably follow a zero-second rule instead. No matter how delicious that cookie is, it is not worth a trip to the hospital! |