***A. ‘Five-Second Rule’ for Food on Floor Is Untrue, Study Finds***

# By CHRISTOPHER MELE

**The New York Times**

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You may think your floors are so clean you can eat off them, but a new study debunking the so-called five-second rule would suggest otherwise.

Professor Donald W. Schaffner, a food microbiologist at Rutgers University in New Jersey, said a two-year study he led concluded that no matter how fast you pick up food that falls on the floor, you will pick up bacteria with it.

The findings in the report — “Is the Five-Second Rule Real?” — appeared online this month in the American Society for Microbiology’s journal, Applied and Environmental Microbiology.

Researchers at Aston University’s School of Life and Health Sciences in England reported in 2014 that food picked up a few seconds after being dropped is “less likely to contain bacteria than if it is left for longer periods of time,” giving rise to news accounts suggesting that eating the food might be harmless. Those findings, and research done at the University of Illinois in 2003, did not appear in a peer-reviewed journal, Professor Schaffner noted.

Even though the five-second rule is a bit of folklore, it still raised important public health issues that demanded closer scrutiny, he said. He cited research by the Centers for Disease Control, which found that surface cross-contamination was the sixth most common contributing factor out of 32 in outbreaks of food-borne illnesses.

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**B. I’m a Doctor. If I Drop Food on the Kitchen Floor, I Still Eat It.**

**By Aaron E. Carroll The New York Times** OCT. 10, 2016

You may have read or heard about the study debunking the five-second rule. It said that no matter how fast you pick up food that falls on the floor, you will pick up bacteria with it.

Our continued focus on this threat has long baffled me. Why are we so worried about the floor? So many other things are more dangerous than that.

I first became interested in the five-second rule years ago, when I was a co- author of a book on medical myths. We cited a number of studies [showing](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/iafp/jfp/2007/00000070/00000010/art00008) [that](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/iafp/jfp/2007/00000070/00000010/art00008) food that touched household surfaces — even for brief periods of time — could pick up bacteria or other harmful substances.

This most recent study was similar in that it tested a variety of foods, a variety of substances, for various periods. And, like those other studies, this one found that food touching the floor, even for a very short amount of time, could pick up bacteria.

There’s no magic period of time that prevents transmission. But even though I know bacteria can accumulate in less than five seconds, I will still eat food that has fallen on my kitchen floor. Why? Because my kitchen floor isn’t really that dirty.

Our metric shouldn’t be whether there are more than zero bacteria on the floor. It should be how many bacteria are on the floor compared with other household surfaces. And in that respect, there are so many places in your house that pose more of a concern than the floor….

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