

by Scott_LaFee

You know the rule: Food dropped on the ground is safe to eat if you pick it up within five seconds. Kids have been citing it for years as justification for eating, well, anything they want to eat.

THE 5-SECOND RULE - New England Researchers found no bacteria present on food samples that remained on the floor for five, 10 or 30 seconds. CNS Photo. MEDTRONICA - The Family Patient Web site at www.familypatient.com is a free site that offers families space to post patient updates, which can be public or restricted to select viewers who have been given a password. CNS Photo. Two Connecticut College student researchers wondered if the rule would stand up to scientific scrutiny. They took two food samples, apple slices and Skittles candies, dropped them on the floors of the college's dining hall and snack bar area, picked them up at different time intervals and then analyzed the samples for microbial contamination.

Their conclusion: There's no need to rush when you drop apple slices and Skittles on the floor - at least not at Connecticut College.

The students found no bacteria present on either sample type that remained on the floor for five, 10 or 30 seconds. After a minute, however, apple slices did show some bacterial presence; Skittles picked up microbes after five minutes on the ground.

The rule, of course, does not necessarily apply to all situations. Foods dropped in, say, a puddle of indeterminate goo are best left where they are.

MEDTRONICA

Family Patient; www.familypatient.com

When a loved one spends an extended time in a hospital, one of the burdens that falls upon family members is keeping others apprised of what's happening. Typically, this means many phone calls. This free Web site offers an alternative: Families post patient updates, which can be public or restricted to select viewers who have been given a password.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Roughly 30,000 Americans are injured each year by toilets.

GET ME THAT. STAT!

The risk of contracting skin cancer is up to 250 times higher for an organ transplant survivor than it is for others. The reason may be due to an immune system weakened by post-transplant drugs.

STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM

Next time you see a physician, ask him or her to do a diabetes test the old-fashioned way. Seventeenth-century doctors tested patients for diabetes by tasting their urine. The amount of sugar detected was a telling sign.

DOC TALK

Thrill - a vibration that a doctor or nurse can feel by touch, often used to describe cardiac murmurs or abnormal blood flow felt through the chest wall.

BEST MEDICINE

A man goes to the doctor. The man has a strawberry growing out of his head. The doctor says, "Here, let me give you some cream to put on that."

HYPOCHONDRIAC'S GUIDE

Normally, the tongue is covered with a layer of papillae or small bumps. A condition called "geographic tongue" results when these bumps disappear from areas of the tongue surface, creating smooth, red patches that give the tongue a sort of maplike or geographic appearance.

The condition can cause discomfort and increased sensitivity to hot or spicy foods. In severe cases, tongue swelling and difficulty swallowing or breathing may occur. Most people, however, experience no other signs or symptoms aside from the patchy appearance.

Geographic tongue, according to the Mayo Clinic, isn't triggered by an infection or another disease. (Stress has been suggested as a possible cause.) It's not related to mouth cancer. It occurs in healthy people and, though persistent, seems to pose no long-term health implications.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Vestiphobia - fear of clothing.

OBSERVATION

Most things get better by themselves. Most things, in fact, are better by morning.

- Lewis Thomas

Last words

"I wish I'd drunk more champagne."

- British economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946)

TRY BURSTS OF SPEED

Instead of walking a long time at a steady pace to burn fat, try doing speed bursts. Short explosions of energy help you burn fat while you work out and long afterward.

A University of Ontario study looked at exercisers who did two to three minutes of high-intensity, 30-second sprints on the bike with four minutes of easy pedaling in between. Performed three times a week, it boosted their ability to use oxygen by 30 percent, a key factor in fat burning.

WEIGHT LOSS AND CANCER

There's a better reason to lose weight than just fitting into your jeans. Evidence increasingly links obesity to cancer, including lymphoma, myeloma and tumors of the breast, colon, esophagus, gallbladder, kidney, liver and uterus.

A 2005 Harvard Medical School analysis indicates that losing 5 to 20 pounds may reduce your cancer risk by 10 percent; larger losses may provide substantially more protection.

WellNews: Need to store it? Floor it by Scott_LaFee