



The Zero-Second Rule Everyone knows the drill: Your tasty treat falls to the floor. You quickly pick it up, pretend nothing happened, and continue eating. Commonly known as the five-second rule, the notion that it takes time to contaminate food is a bunch of baloney, says food-science professor Paul Dawson. His research discovered that salmonella and other bacteria can survive up to four weeks on dry surfaces and transfer to food immediately upon contact. Dawson concluded from more recent experiments that repeated dunking into a dip or sauce using the same edible vehicle, aka double-dipping, is another routine practice that can spread bugs. Although illness may not result, “it’s like you’re kissing someone,” he explains, “and it’s not just a peck on the cheek.” —Catherine Barker



Cup sharing

A new study on shared drinks shows the rim and liquid of a single cup can have more than 10,000 bacteria.



Dip tip

Viscosity matters. Runny salsa totes more germs back and forth than thick guacamole, which drips less.



Chopstick check

Dawson’s team also found that chopsticks and other utensils are effective carriers of bacteria.

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