

HOME FOOD SAFETY MYTHBUSTERS

Home Food Safety Mythbusters Story: The Germ Goggles

Sam couldn't believe his eyes when his science teacher burst into the classroom wearing a pair of massive green goggles. Mr. McKinley was quite the inventor and Sam was eager to see what he had come up with this time.

*Mr. McKinley waited until the laughter subsided. "Last week during our foodborne illness unit, we learned that some germs are dangerous and you can't see, smell, or taste them. But now, you CAN see them with my high-tech GERM GOGGLES!"**

Mr. McKinley announced that the class could take turns bringing the Germ Goggles home to find where germs might be hiding. Sam was the first to volunteer.

Sam's mom was so preoccupied making dinner that she didn't even notice when Sam came in wearing massive green goggles. She was rinsing handfuls of salad in the sink and Sam watched in horror as the germs moved from his mom's hands to the salad mix!

He cleared his throat, "Uhhh, mom? You're getting germs on our salad...did you wash your hands with soap and water before you started rinsing the salad?"

"What are you talking about Sam..." she trailed off as she turned towards him. "And what on earth is on your head?"

"Mr. McKinley's Germ Goggles." His mom looked at him quizzically. "No, they work – here you see for yourself!" he said, shoving the goggles at his mom.

She was silent as she looked into her salad bowl wearing the Germ Goggles.

"My goodness, you're right. I can see that germs got on the salad from my unclean hands! And I see on the package the bagged greens are pre-washed. Next time I'll just use the greens without handling them so much. [Who would think rinsing bagged greens could hurt?](#)"

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Later that night, Sam was looking inside a very germ-y refrigerator. He peeked at the magnetic dry erase board hanging on the door. Yep, it was his big sister's turn to clean the fridge. He was shaking his head as she came up behind him.

"What are you shaking your head at squirt?" she asked, her eyes narrowing.

"The fridge is gross, and it was YOUR turn to clean it."

"Oh relax germ-a-phobe," she said rolling her eyes, "[It's too cold in there for germs to grow.](#)"

"Well, these Germ Goggles beg to differ." he said, waving them in her face.

"Ugh, let me guess, Mr. McK..." she shut up as she saw the germs inside the fridge. "Gross. I guess you're right germ-a-phobe." she said, shrugging her shoulders. "But what-ev, I'm still not cleaning it." She grabbed a soda and skipped away.

Sam rolled up his sleeves and got to work. Now that he could SEE the germs, he couldn't leave the fridge looking like THAT!

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In the morning, Sam plopped his sleepy self down at the kitchen counter and watched as his dad carefully arranged cut melon slices on a plate. Sam grabbed his Germ Goggles and looked at his dad's artistic plate of sliced melon. "Dad...did you wash the outside of the melon before you started slicing it?"

"No sleepyhead!" his dad answered cheerfully. "[We're only eating the part on the inside.](#)"

"Yeah but you've stacked them on the plate and now some of the rinds are touching the part we eat. I see germs on the slices - probably because you didn't wash the outside first!" He handed his father the Germ Goggles.

Sam's dad sighed, "I guess I have to start over. Good catch though. To think Mr. McKinley made something that works..."

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That afternoon, Sam's dad was rinsing an apple for his snack. He proudly announced to Sam that he had rinsed his apple. But as he walked into the living room, the apple was still dripping wet.

"Wait, Dad - [you forgot a step!](#) You're supposed to dry it with a clean cloth or paper towel after you rinse it."

"How do you know that? You're not even wearing the Germ Goggles!" asked his dad, surprised.

"I don't need them...I remember it from class! A study showed that drying produce further reduced microbial loads." Sam noticed his parents exchanging impressed glances.

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Sam had to give the Germ Goggles back after the weekend, but the experience opened his eyes forever. Even though he couldn't literally see the germs anymore, he knew where they could be and how to Fight BAC! ®

* P.S.: There is no such device as Germ Goggles available for home use.

Discussion Questions:

1. When deciding whether or not to rinse bagged greens, what words should you look for on the package?
2. If Sam hadn't decided to clean the refrigerator, in what ways might this create a food safety risk for his family?
3. Why should you always rinse fresh fruits and vegetables before cutting them?
4. Fill in the blank: You should always use a _____ cloth or paper towel to dry fresh produce after rinsing.