

Rylee & Rusty

discuss food safety

One day when Rylee and Rusty were walking home after school, Rusty pulled an apple out of his bag and started to take a bite. Rylee, grabbing his arm asked, "Hey! Did you wash that?" "I dunno. My mom probably did," Rusty replied completely puzzled. "HOW old are you?" Rylee asked. "You know food safety is everybody's responsibility," she exclaimed with exasperation.

"Oh Rylee!" Rusty replied with a shrug of his shoulders, "Why are you making such a big deal out of this?"

With her hands on her hips Rylee scowled at him and raised her voice, "WHY am I making a BIG DEAL?!"

"Yeah, why?" he asked, calm as ever.

"You have heard of *E. coli* O157:H7, right?" For a minute there Rylee sounded like Ms. Coffman, but then she said, "I sit next to you in science class every day Rustin Archibald Brown. Have you not been listening?"

Rusty replied with an uncertain, "No?"

"Well," Rylee said, "*E. coli* is a kind of bacteria that can make you really sick. So sick, in fact... that if you had to choose between cleaning your room or being sick from *E. coli*, you'd pick cleaning your room any day of the week!"

"That's pretty sick," said Rusty, "I hate cleaning my room."

Rylee continued, "Your stomach feels like an elephant is standing on it, you're puking your guts out, and... well, let's just say ya make a big mess in the bathroom."

"What did she just say?" he thought to himself. Clutching his stomach Rusty groaned, "Yuck! RY-LEE, stop!"

Rylee paused for just a second to take a breath and then Rusty cut in, "It's like *Salmonella* or *Listeria* – right?"

Peering over her round glasses, Rylee gave him one of her famous smiles and said, "Yes! I knew you were listening!"



Rusty continued, "So let's say somebody with dirty hands picks up this apple. If I don't wash it first, then I put it in my mouth with someone else's dirt on it, I can get really sick. Is that what you're trying to say?"

"Uh, Hello? Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying!" announced Rylee. "Of course, no one's going to eat food with a clump of dirt on it. We're talking about bacteria – and "dirt" that can't be seen with your eyes. That's why it's so important that we wash our hands after using the bathroom, playing with our pets, or getting off the bus. You know—places where our hands come in contact with other people's germs."

"And if my hands are clean—,"

"Yes", Rylee said, "Go on!" She loved when she could teach Rusty something.

"Why would I want to pick up fruits or vegetables that are unwashed?"

"Precisely," said Rylee. "Last year alone, 1 in 6 people got sick from something they ate."

Working out the details in his head, Rusty replied, "So statistically out of my dad and mom, and 3 sisters, and I – one of us will get sick this year because of food poisoning!" "I hope it's one of my sisters," he said with a smirk.

Rylee stopped in her tracks and waited. When he realized it he paused and looked back at her. "Rusty, this is serious," she said with some disappointment.

"I know. Sorry." Then motioning to her said, "Come on..."

They walked along in silence for a minute or two. Then Rusty looked her in the eye and said, "Well?!" and then took the biggest bite possible out of his apple!

Horrified, Rylee yelped!



"Relax, Rylee," he told her with a smile and a little jab to the ribs, "I did before I left the house this morning. Everyone knows you have to wash your fruits and vegetables. Don't they?"

Rylee grimaced and shook her head at him. Then with a big smile and a wink said, "If I have anything to do with it they will."

