



The Noble Architect Foundation

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## Conversations with My Daughter What is Salmonella, daddy?

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**T:** Why are we eating tomatoes?

**Dad:** You must have heard about Salmonella “thing-e-majigy.”

**T:** (*Chuckles*). You used “thing-e-majigy”!

**Dad:** I know.

**T:** Dad, You know about Salmonella?

**Dad:** These tomatoes are different. They don’t carry the Salmonella bacteria. I checked!

**T:** What is Salmonella?

**Dad:** Are you sure you want to talk about it now – while eating breakfast?

**T:** Sure.

**Dad:** It’s a form of bacteria.

**T:** Can it kill you?

**Dad:** It might. But, it definitely, makes infected people feel like they want to die!

**T:** What does it do?

**Dad:** It causes diarrhea.

**T:** Yuck! Double Yuck!

**Dad:** Do you, still, want to know more?

**T:** No thanks, dad!

**Dad:** Good answer!

*Staring at her food...*

**T:** Dad, How can they get in tomatoes?

**Dad:** They can get into anything and everything. Any live thing I mean.

**T:** How?

**Dad:** The bacteria live in reptiles, such as turtles, snakes, etc...

**T:** Turtle is an amphibian!

**Dad:** Right; what did I say?

**T:** You said reptile.

**Dad:** Isn’t it both!

**T:** I guess.

**Dad:** It lives in frogs too. That’s an amphibian. Is that right?

**T:** Right!

**Dad:** It does not make them sick; but once it gets into food items, it becomes life threatening to humans.

**T:** Can it kill you? Oh, wait; you said no.

**Dad:** Well, it can kill old people, very young people, sick people and also people who have very weak immune systems.

**T:** What is immune system?

**Dad:** Immunity is like resistance! People whose bodies can not resist bacteria or virus attacks have weak immune systems. But, if a healthy person eats a food item infected with Salmonella bacteria will not die but can get very sick. So sick that may wish or feel like he wants to die.

**T:** Dad, how does it get into food?

**Dad:** Do you really want to know?

**T:** Yes!

**Dad:** Through those animals’ feces!

**T:** What are feces?

**Dad:** Poop!

**T:** Yuck! Yuck! Yuck! Are you serious?



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**Dad:** That's what happened with this recent outbreak. Some feces from these animals got into the water system that was irrigating the tomato fields and contaminated the tomatoes.

**T:** What is an outbreak?

**Dad:** An outbreak; It was not the right word – I used. An outbreak is when something like this happens at a larger scale. This particular one was an isolated case. Only few hundred people were affected. An outbreak, usually, affects thousands and thousands.

**T:** How about spaghetti sauce, dad? Is that infected too?

**Dad:** If you cook the salmonella bacteria you'd kill it. Specially my spaghetti sauces! You know I cook them for days! So, if you touch contaminated water - water that was infected with a frog or a turtle or a snake's feces – and you wash your hands with warm water (and soup), chances are you'd kill the bacteria before it can try to cause any harms to you.

**T:** I can't believe we talked about feces during breakfast.

**Dad:** I did warn you; didn't I? Plus, it was a scientific talk. Did you learn anything?

**T:** I guess!

**Dad:** You should do some more research about this. Why don't you look it up?

**T:** I don't have any computer time left!

**Dad:** Too bad! Do you want to earn some computer time.

**T:** No!

**Dad:** Okay!

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