S1 – The Dandruff Among Us
Category: Fungus
Species: Malassezia globosa
Dandruff can be embarrassing, but those itchy flakes are just our own skin. About half of us have dandruff, thanks to a fungus found on everyone’s scalp. Sometimes this fungus moves into a different habitat—down inside hair follicles, where it irritates our skin. The skin responds by creating more living cells, which push dead skin cells to the surface. Those dead skin cells are dandruff.

S2 – Cheeky Little Mites
Category: Arthropod
Species: Demodex folliculorum
Right now, tiny mites may be living wherever there is hair on your body. But one species prefers your face in particular. These mites burrow headfirst into the hair follicles of your cheeks, eyebrows or eyelashes. They scarf down dead skin cells, oils, hormones and even mascara! Don’t worry though. These mites are harmless, and nearly everyone over 12 has them.

S3 – Combating Acne
Category: Bacteria
Species Types: Propionibacterium acnes & Staphylococcus epidermidis
Some strains of the bacterium Propionibacterium acnes may be involved in triggering acne. However, another common skin bacterium could bring relief. Staphylococcus epidermidis releases an acid that has been shown to limit the growth of P. acnes. In the future, people might apply such helpful bacteria as probiotics to keep skin clear.

S4 – A Tale of Two Staphs
Category: Bacteria
Species Types: Staphylococcus aureus and Staphylococcus epidermidis
The inside of your nose is a busy place. Microorganisms are probably competing for territory there right now. For instance, Staphylococcus aureus likes to set up shop inside your nasal passages. Once there, some strains cause minor inflammation or larger problems like pneumonia.
But a second type of staph, *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, halts the first one in its tracks. It even destroys existing *S. aureus* colonies. Ongoing research may lead to medications that use *S. epidermidis* as a healing agent.

**S5 – The Hands Have It**  
*Category: Bacteria  
Species Types: Many*  
If you shake hands with someone, or grab the subway pole, pathogens might be grabbing onto you. But these pathogens are usually only a temporary problem because our hands are already home to many kinds of helpful bacteria. Beneficial bacteria dominate our hand ecosystem and fight off bacteria that don't belong by producing toxic chemicals like acids.

When you wash with soap and water, the temporary bacteria are swept away. Some of your helpful bacteria are too, but they soon grow back to take their rightful place in the palm of your hand.

**S6 – A Malaria Magnet**  
*Category: Parasite  
Species: *Anopheles gambiae*  
Bacteria on our skin constantly break down compounds like proteins and fatty acids. Each person's singular combination of bacteria in action generates a unique scent. People can smell that scent, and so can creatures like mosquitos. Mosquitos seek out people with certain aromas. That includes one species that carries malaria. The mosquito gently alights upon a person. Then it finds a blood vessel to fill up, while infecting the person with sporozoites.

**S7 – A Traitor Turns Hero**  
*Category: Bacteria  
Species Types: *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Propionibacterium acnes*  
Depending upon where bacteria live, they can behave differently. Consider the bacteria that seem to cause acne when on the surface of our skin. When these same bacteria grow in a wound beneath our skin, they act in our favor.

In the wound, and without oxygen, the bacteria release a chemical that forms a protective layer. This layer keeps dangerous, drug-resistant infections like MRSA from entering our bloodstream. That's a good thing—MRSA is responsible for 126,000 hospitalizations each year in the United States alone!
S8 – Fungi on our Feet

Category: Fungi
Genus Types: Aspergillus and Saccharomyces

Taken together, there are 250,000-300,000 sweat glands on the soles of our feet. This humid, salty environment is why fungi happily grow under our toenails, in the webbing between our toes, and on our heels.

In fact, our heels house many more fungi species than any other spot on our body. The relative of one genus that lives there, Aspergillus, is used in the production of miso. That’s the paste used in Japanese cooking. Another genus, Saccharomyces, has cousins that are the yeasts used to make bread and beer!

S9 – Don’t Sweat It

Category: Bacteria
Species Types: Bacillus subtilis and Brevibacterium linens

Worried about smelly feet? Don’t be—it’s not your fault. Some bacteria living on your feet produce distinct, unpleasant smells when they process sweat. However, one especially stinky type of bacteria doesn’t even need sweat to make the smells. These bacteria eat the dead skin cells on the soles of your feet. They create a rotten-egg odor. These same bacteria are responsible for the foul smell of certain ripe cheeses.