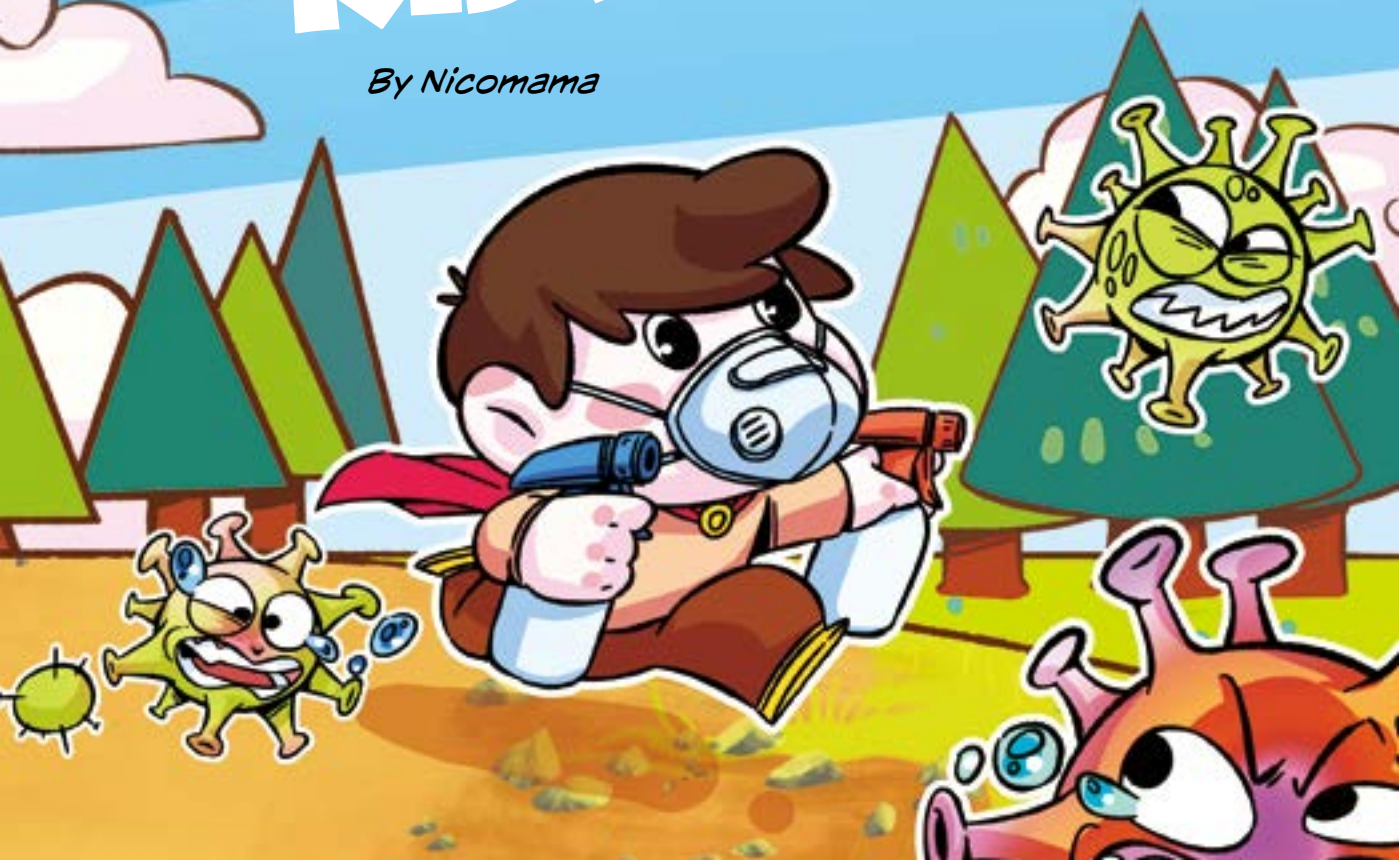




# COVID-19: WHAT CAN KIDS DO?

*By Nicomama*





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## Introduction

2020 did not seem like years past. There were no festivals or parades. There were no concerts or trips. And, there were no more days in the classroom or after-school activities.

It seemed as if people woke up and, suddenly, the world was different. People were different, too. Adults seemed especially strange. They were more worried than usual. And, they were talking about a scary new disease.



What was the matter?

What was different about 2020?

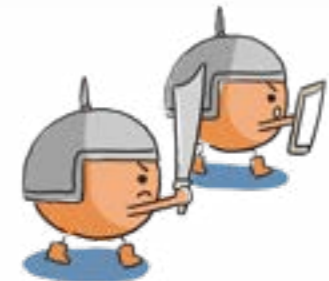
It turned out that there was a terrible pandemic (worldwide outbreak) of a disease called COVID-19. The disease was caused by a virus, a tiny germ that can attack living cells. The new virus could make people very sick.

The virus had already spread all over the world, passing from one person to another. It could be spread through sneezes and coughs, through physical contact with infected people or surfaces, or even through the air.



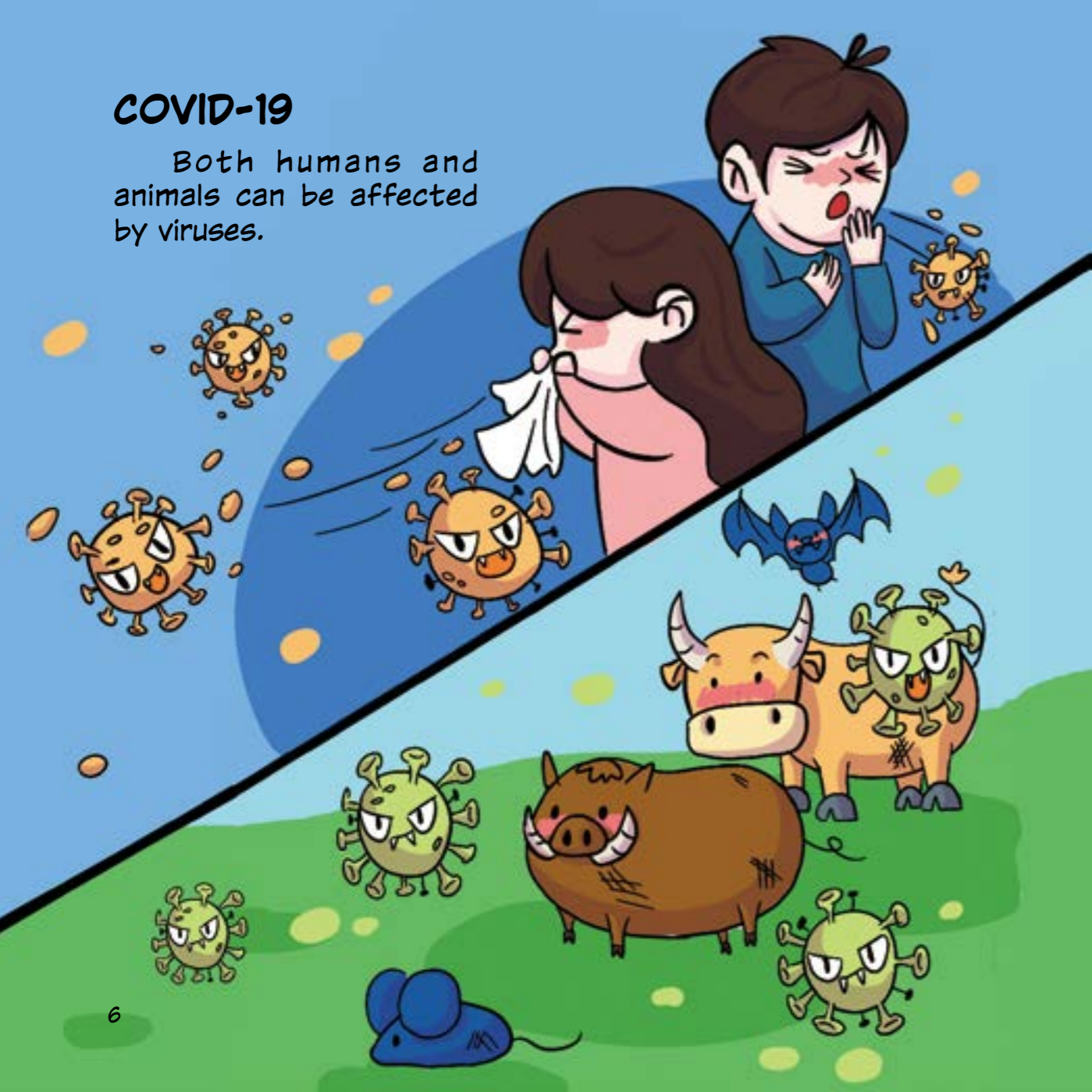
Infected people could develop a fever or cough. They could also have trouble breathing. Kids could be infected, too. Their symptoms were usually not as bad as in older people. But kids could still pass the virus to others.

But, kids were not powerless in the spread of the virus. In fact, kids were an important line of defense in the fight against the disease. One way to have power in a difficult situation is to know the facts. So, let's look at some facts. We'll start by learning more about COVID-19.



## COVID-19

Both humans and animals can be affected by viruses.



Wild animals can serve as hosts (carriers) of various diseases that do not normally infect human beings.

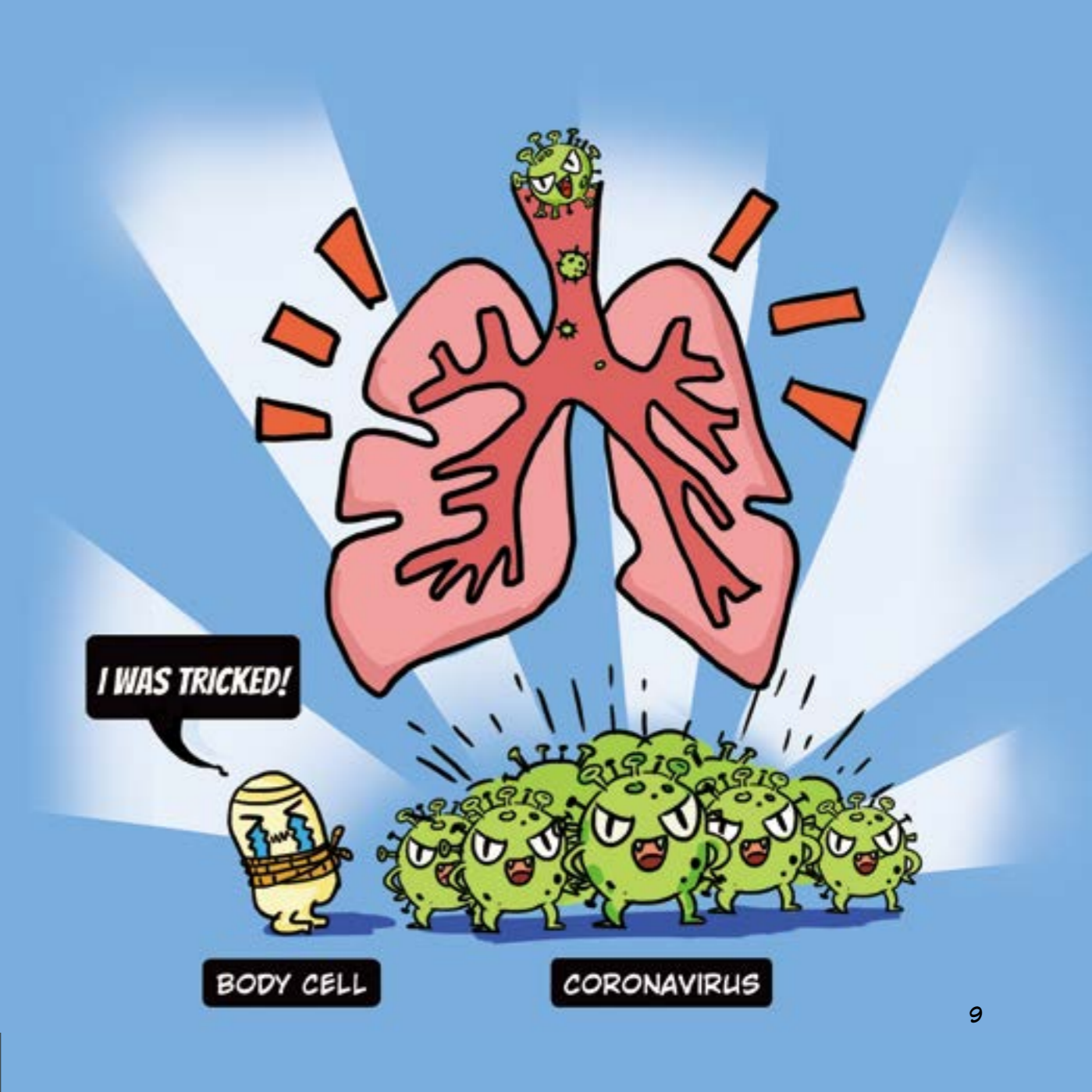


In rare cases, however, an animal disease can be passed to people. A human disease that begins in animals is called a zoonosis. Such serious diseases as smallpox and influenza began as zoonoses (the plural of zoonosis). COVID-19 appears to be a zoonosis that was transferred to people from bats.

COVID-19 is caused by a type of coronavirus. Coronaviruses are one of many viruses that cause the common cold and other diseases of the respiratory system.

The respiratory system is made up of the lungs. It also includes the network of air passageways that connects the lungs to the nose and mouth.

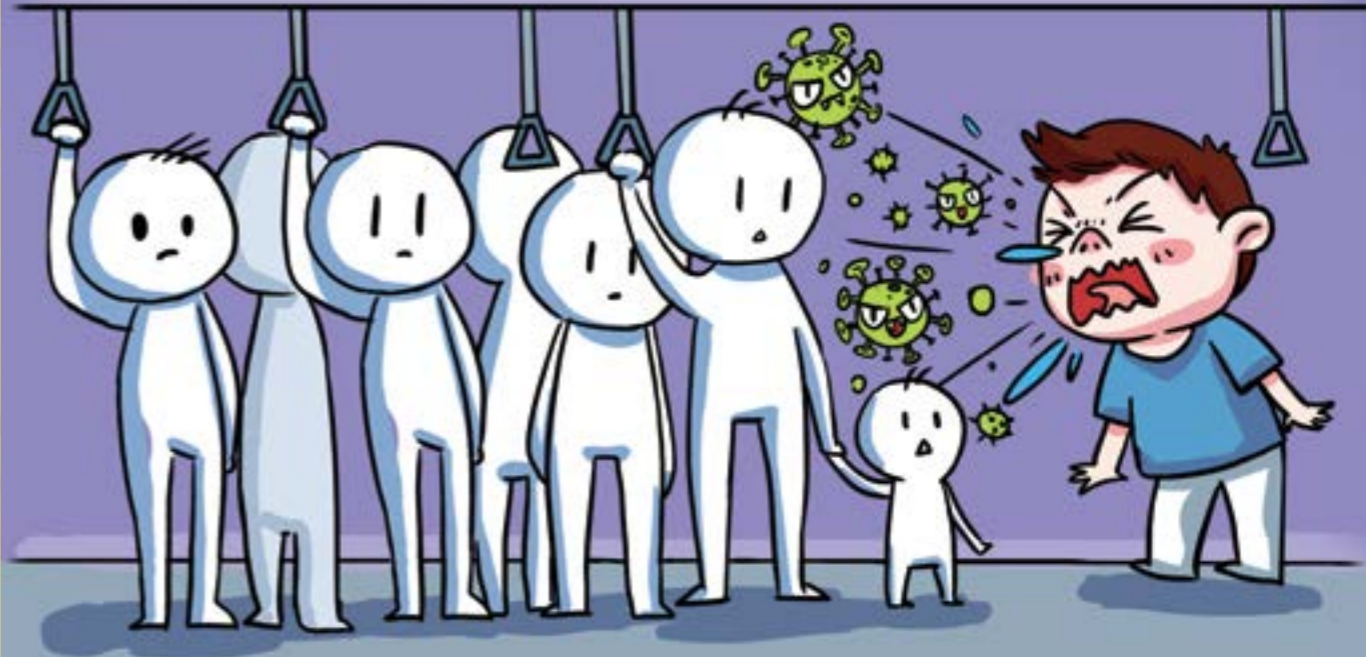
When the virus gets into the respiratory system, it can "trick" the body's own cells into making copies of itself. The quickly multiplying virus can make a person very sick.

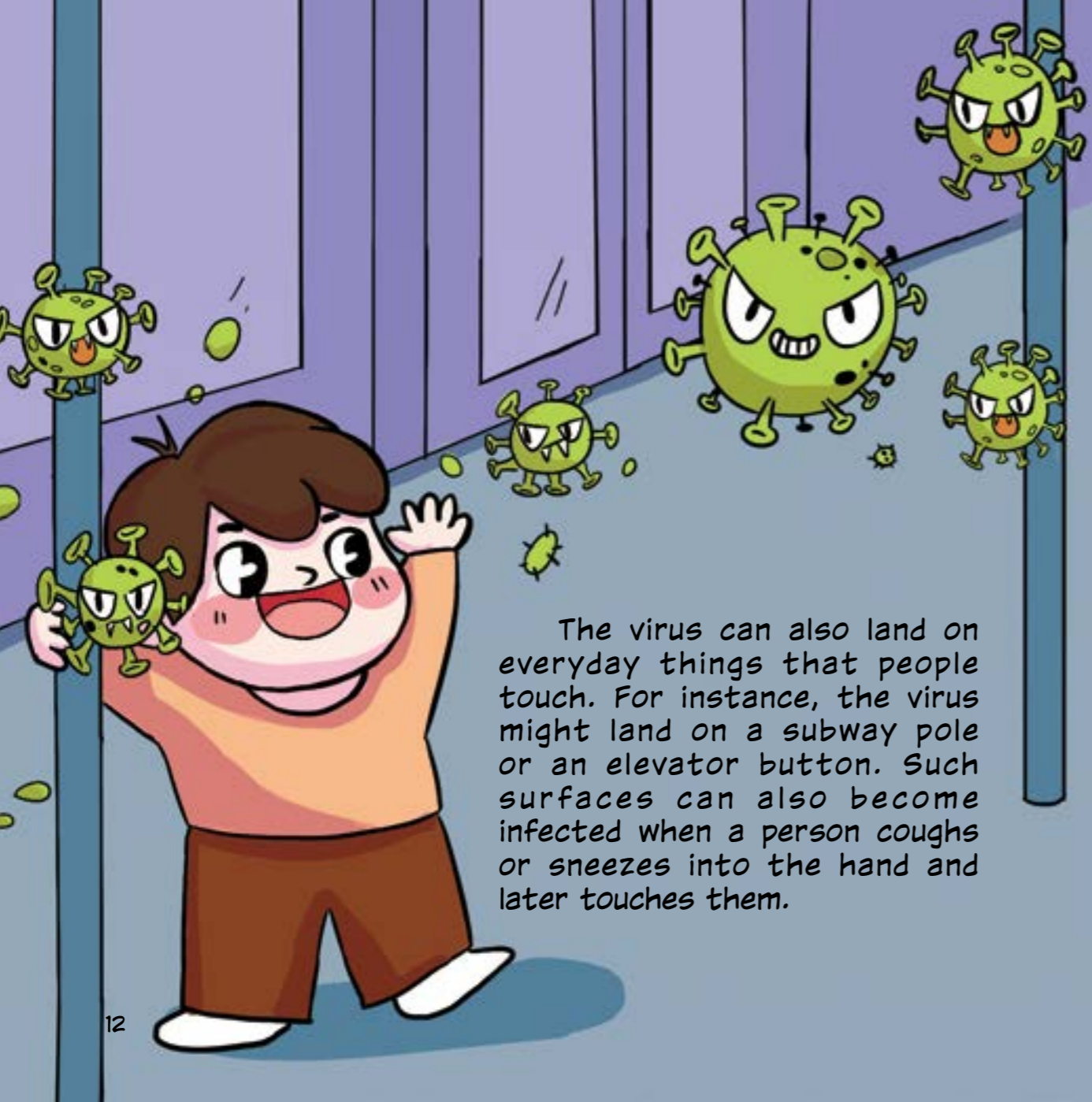


People infected with the virus may have a variety of symptoms. They may have difficulty breathing. They may also have a cough and a fever.



COVID-19 is contagious, meaning it spreads from one person to another. The virus may be released in tiny droplets of liquid. Such droplets are given off when people breathe, talk, cough, and sneeze. The germs may linger in such droplets until they reach another host. Sneezes are an especially powerful way to pass on the disease. A sneeze can spray virus-infected droplets more than 6 feet (2 meters).





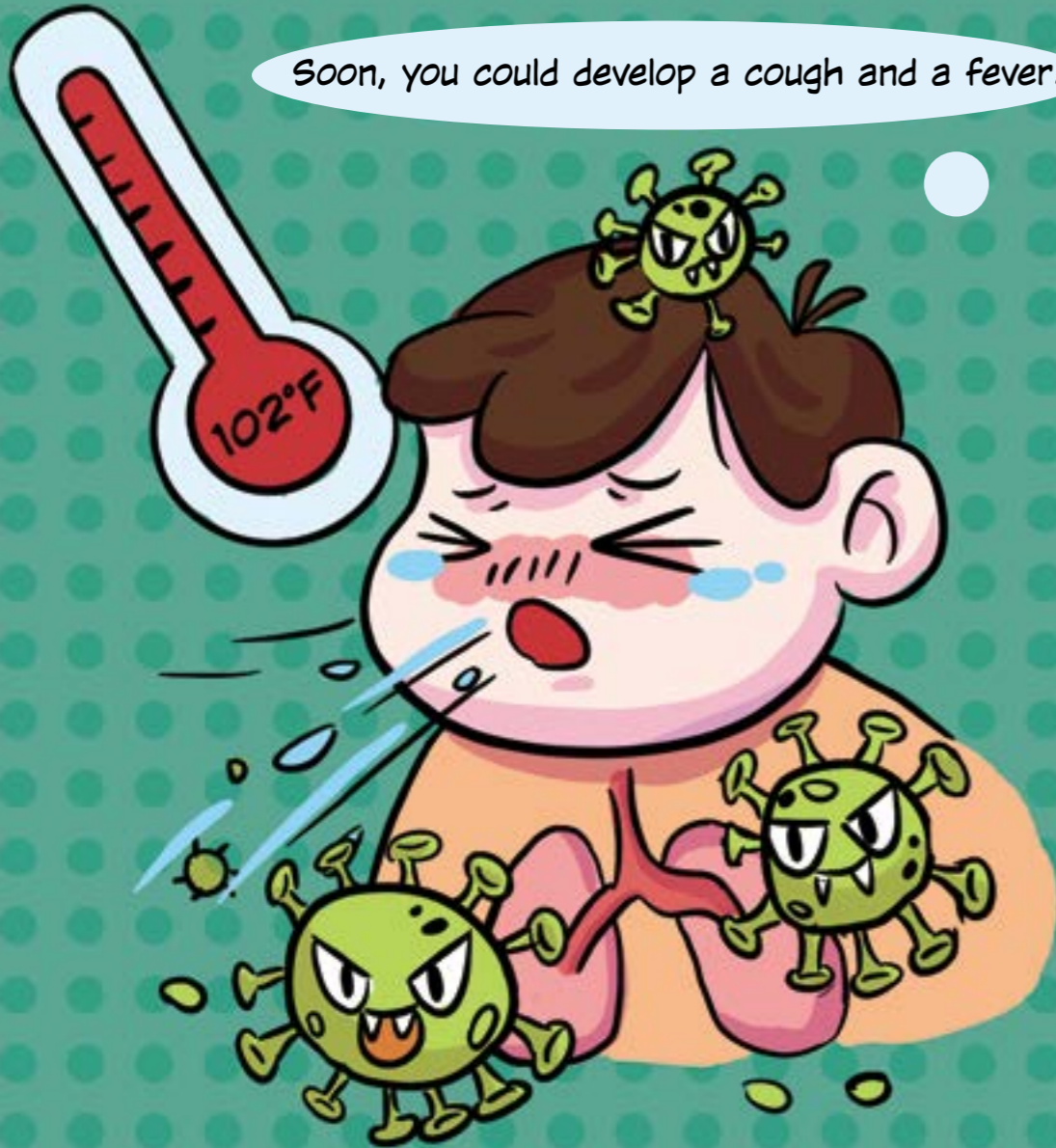
The virus can also land on everyday things that people touch. For instance, the virus might land on a subway pole or an elevator button. Such surfaces can also become infected when a person coughs or sneezes into the hand and later touches them.

Touching an infected surface may spread the virus to your hands. When you touch your face or eat food with your fingers, the virus can enter your body through your nose or mouth.





Soon, you could develop a cough and a fever.



So, you don't want to be infected.

**What should you do?**



## Wash Your Hands Frequently

If you wash your hands before you eat, the germs will wash away or even break down. Hand washing is important because it removes or destroys germs on the hands, preventing their spread through touch.



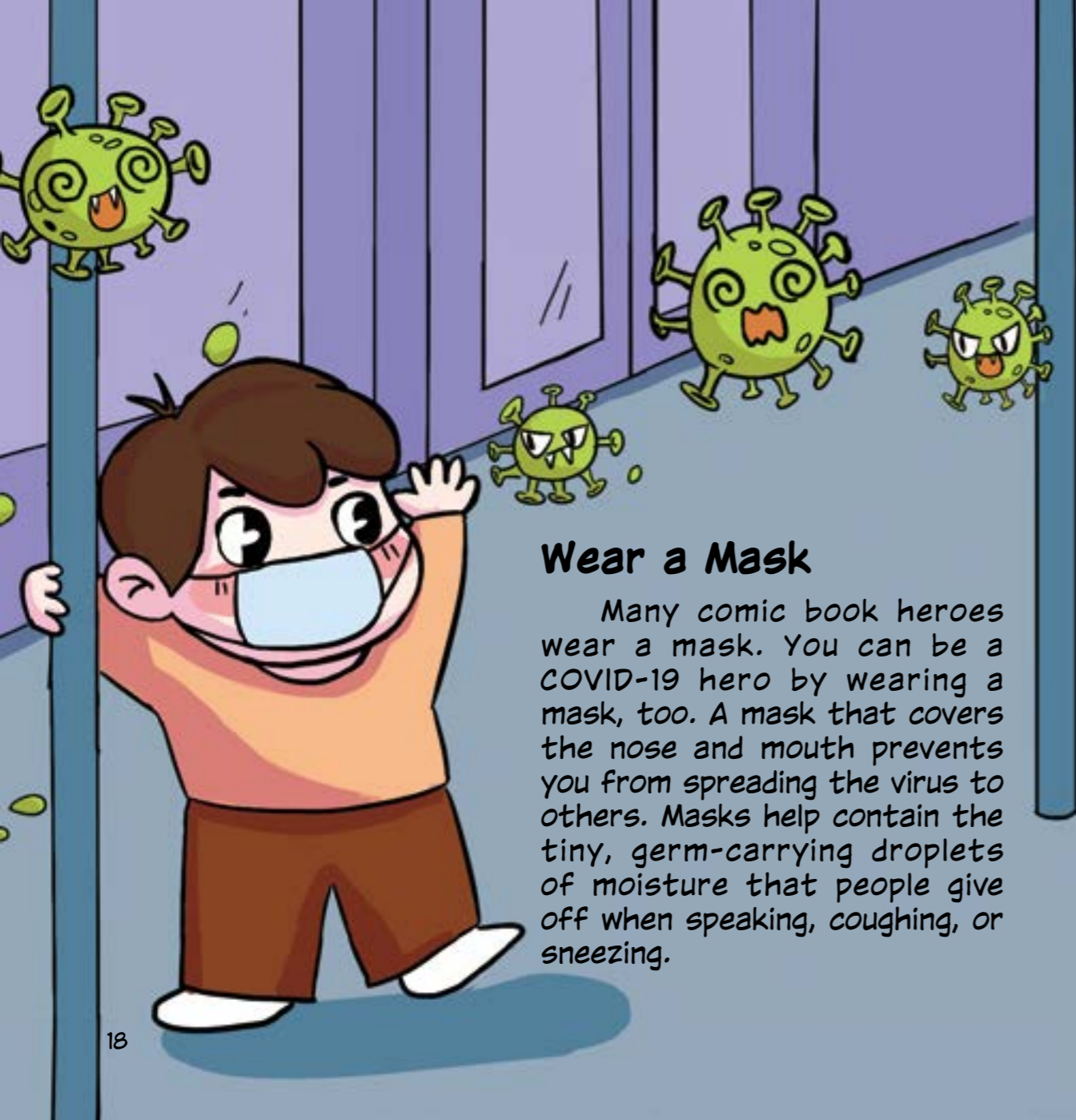
Not all ways of washing your hands have the same result. For instance, just wetting your hands with cold water won't get rid of many germs. For best results, you should use antibacterial soap. Antibacterial means that it fights against bacteria, another kind of germ that can also cause illness. To wash your hands carefully, do as follows:



Repeatedly rub the palms, backs of hands, fingers, and nails with running water and antibacterial soap. Wash your hands for 20 seconds. This is enough time to thoroughly and carefully clean your hands.



You might wonder, "How am I supposed to know when it's been 20 seconds?" You could set a timer, but your timer might get soaked! Instead, sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice. This can make hand washing feel like a celebration!



## Wear a Mask

Many comic book heroes wear a mask. You can be a COVID-19 hero by wearing a mask, too. A mask that covers the nose and mouth prevents you from spreading the virus to others. Masks help contain the tiny, germ-carrying droplets of moisture that people give off when speaking, coughing, or sneezing.

## How to put on a mask



1. Wash your hands (see page 17).



2. Pull the ear loops of the mask to both sides of your face.



3. Secure the ear loops around your ears.



4. Use your clean hands to fit the mask to your face. Make sure your nose and mouth are both covered.

## How to remove a mask



1. Keep your hands away from the front of the mask and pull the two ear loops, removing them from your ears.



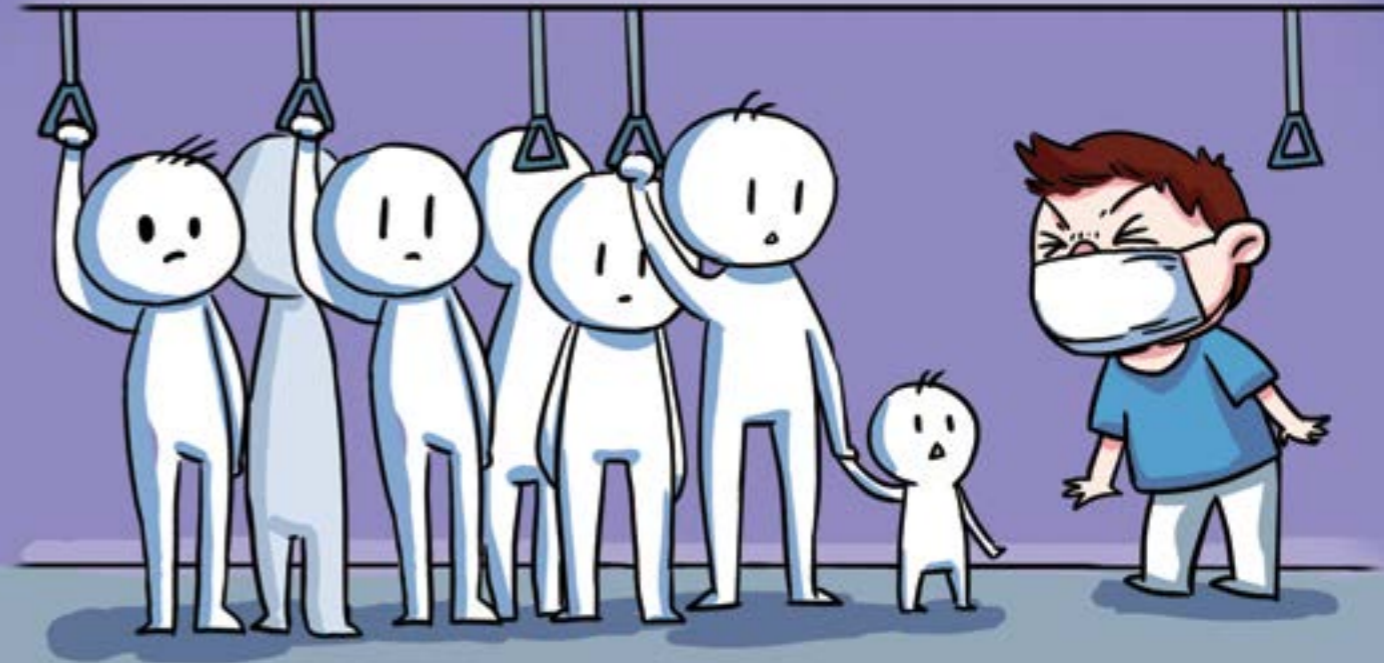
2. Remove the mask and throw it into the trash can. If your mask is reusable, you do not need to throw it away and should clean it instead.



3. Carefully wash your hands.

## Cover Your Cough

When you cough, cover your mouth with either your elbow or a tissue. This can help prevent the spread of the virus. This is one of the most important ways to contribute to the health of your community. A mask can also help to contain a cough.



When you cough, it's not enough to just turn your head.



And, it's not a good idea to cover your cough with your hands.



Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue is the best way to contain your germs.

If you don't have a tissue, cough into your elbow. This method is called a vampire cough. When you cough into your elbow, you look like a vampire hiding his face behind a cape.

## Don't Touch!

The coronavirus is just one of the many viruses and bacteria out there in the world. Viruses and bacteria stick to the seats on a school bus. They rest on handrails. They lurk in the refrigerator. They sit at the kitchen table. They might even sit in your usual spot at the table!





So, get used to not touching things unnecessarily when you go outside. If you're really tempted to touch something, such as a seat on the bus, try studying it with your eyes instead. Examine its color, shape, and pattern. Then, when you get home, draw a picture of it!

Sometimes after a long day of exploring, you get tired. You may be tempted to rub your sleepy eyes. Don't forget to wash your hands first. Touching your eyes or putting your hands in your mouth or nose can lead to infection.



When going out, you can work on some new habits. For instance, press an elevator button with a tissue. Push open a door with your elbow or shoulder, rather than your hands. Try turning on the faucet with your wrists. (It might take a few tries to get the hang of it!)

All these changes help you to avoid contact with infected surfaces.



When you visit the supermarket or another store with an adult, be sure to wipe clean the cart handle. You may also wear disposable gloves. For a fun game at the supermarket, pretend your favorite sticky, gooey treat is making your hands stick to the inside of your pockets. See how long you can go without taking them out!

You can also bring a bottle of hand sanitizer with you when you leave the house. Use it to clean your hands after touching any public objects.



## Disinfection

Now more than ever, you might notice workers cleaning and disinfecting public places. They are removing and destroying germs, before they spread. You may notice your parents or others cleaning up more around the house, too. If you're careful and follow their instructions, they may even allow you to help.



Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs. Because these chemicals are so strong, it is important to wear proper safety gear when using disinfectants. For instance, people may use rubber gloves to protect the hands. People may also open a window to provide good ventilation.



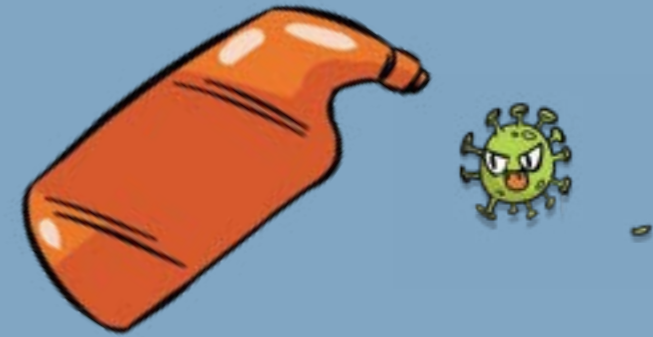
Some disinfectants use alcohol to destroy germs. They should be at least 70 percent alcohol. With the help of an adult, you can clean the surfaces your family touches most. These might include light switches, telephones, door and drawer handles, and touchscreens.



One very strong cleaning substance is called bleach.



Bleach is used for a variety of purposes, including whitening paper or brightening clothes. And, some people use bleach as a disinfectant. Even though bleach can be helpful, it is also very dangerous. Never drink bleach or let it touch your skin. And never use bleach without adult supervision. You want to kill germs, but you could end up harming your body.



Powerful, bleach-based germ fighters can be used to disinfect trashcans, floors, tables, and other places you frequently touch. Be sure to only use these products with an adult's guidance.



When you return home, change out of the clothes you wore outside. This can help to avoid bringing in germs from outdoors.



## The Immune System

By developing these good health habits, you can protect against the spread of COVID-19, as well as other diseases.

But, if the virus does enter your body, don't be afraid—you have an immune system that is ready to attack and kill germs.

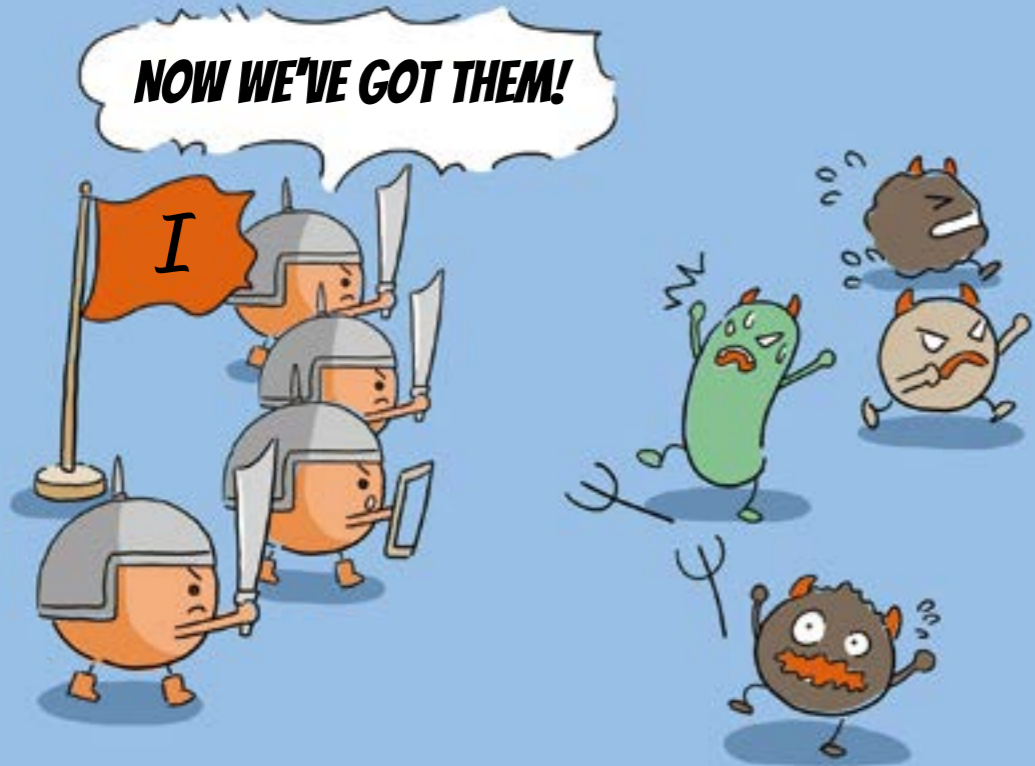


Immunity is the body's ability to resist the invasion of disease-causing organisms called pathogens. The immune system looks for invaders and attacks.

The immune system isn't always victorious at first. Sometimes, pathogens get the upper hand.



Eventually, the immune system may beat back the invaders. Then, it may seem as if the immune system remembers the enemy's every move. In reality, it creates a specialized team of disease fighters. These fighters are called antibodies. Antibodies may neutralize such pathogens as viruses and bacteria. They can also mark pathogens for destruction by special germ-fighting cells. When the harmful substance enters the body again, antibodies may quickly recognize the enemy and defeat it.



Babies receive antibodies from their mother in the womb. These antibodies protect babies for several months after birth.



Antibodies multiply and get stronger as babies grow. So, as babies laugh and crawl and walk, their antibodies get stronger—and so do their cries!

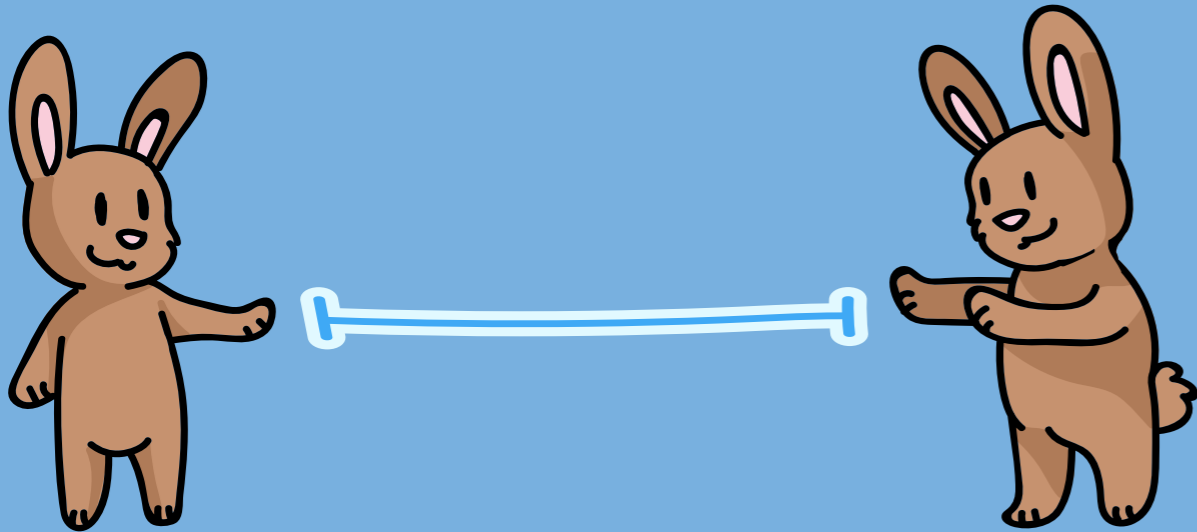


It takes a long time for the immune system to reach full strength. But, you have the power to help the immune system grow strong. Eat well and sleep well. See a doctor and take medicine when you're ill. And, to build a strong immunity community, urge your friends and family to strengthen their immunities, too!

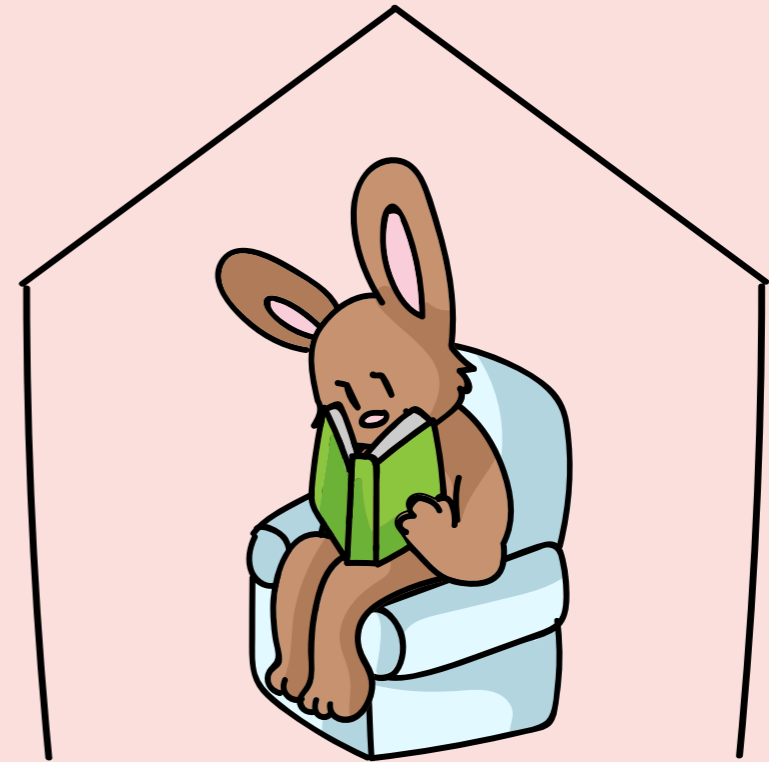
## Social Distancing

One powerful way to fight contagious illness is through social distancing. Social distancing involves avoiding unnecessary contact with others. It robs the disease of opportunities to spread.

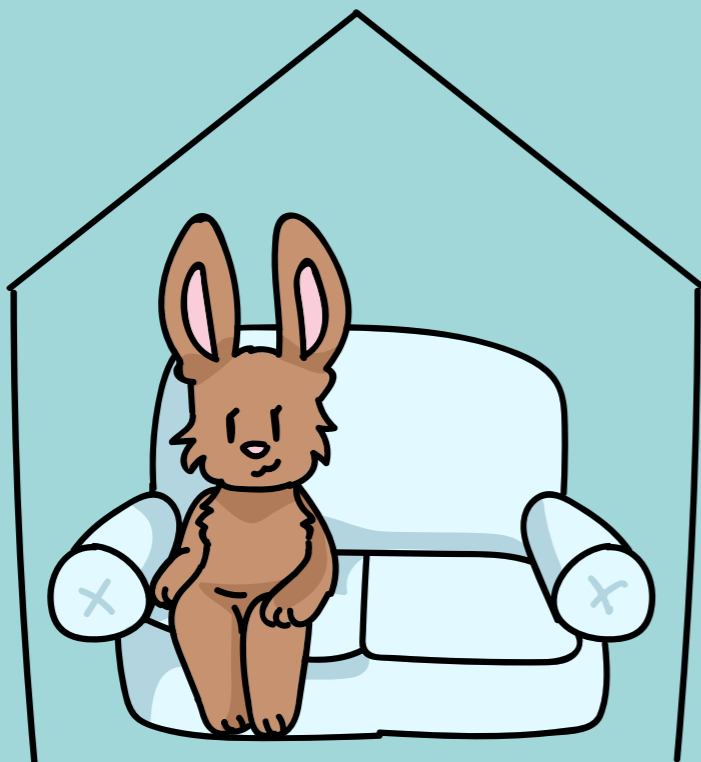
Social distancing means avoiding close contact with people outside your immediate family. In public, maintain a distance of 6 feet (2 meters) between yourself and others.



To aid in social distancing, people may be asked to stay home as much as possible. Schools, parks, and other public places may be closed. Concerts, parades, and other crowded events may be cancelled.



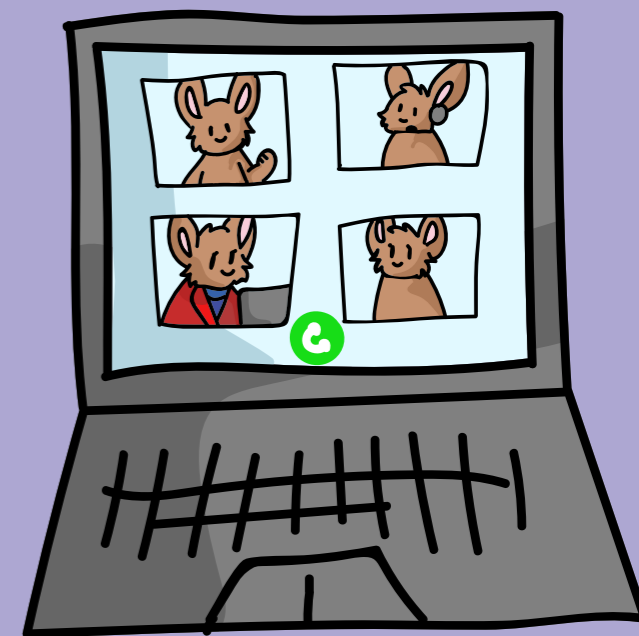
A day home from school may sound like fun. But spending all that extra time in the house can also feel lonely and scary. You may miss your friends and family. You may miss going to the movies or sporting events. You may even miss doing such ordinary things as taking a walk or going to the grocery store. This sadness can affect your mood.



Sadness and fear can be particularly powerful in quarantine. Quarantine is when people are isolated because they have the disease or may have been exposed to it.

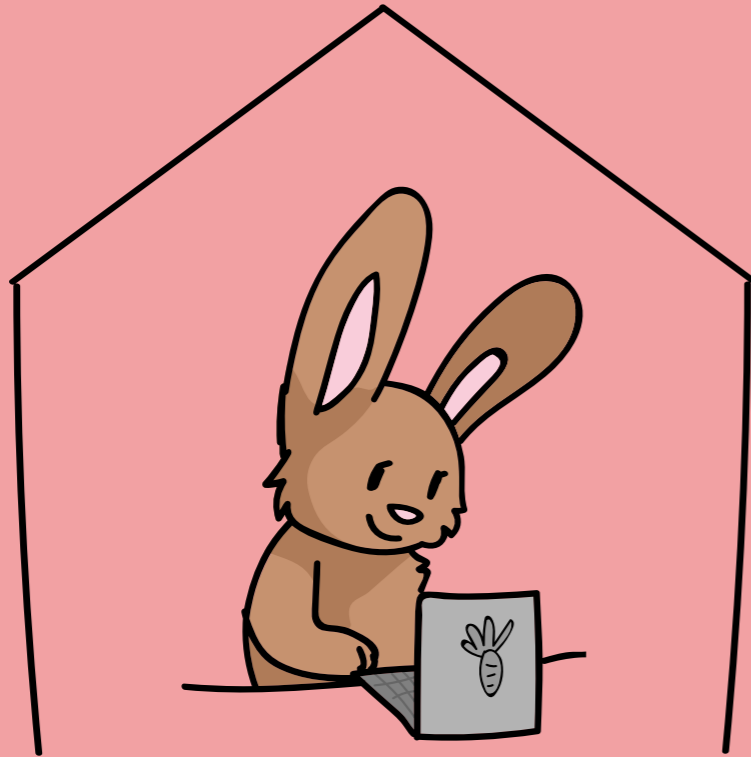
Sadness is perfectly normal. You might feel anxious about change or the unknown. Your anxiety might overwhelm you. There may be things you can do to help you feel calm.

Stay connected to your friends and family. Write letters or send pictures. Have virtual (online) playdates with friends. It is also important to keep moving. Add some variety to your day with dance breaks or exercise breaks. These breaks will help you stay healthy and focused.





Feeling happy is also normal, even during a scary pandemic. It's okay to make the best of the extra time you have to spend with family or do fun activities by yourself.



## The End of the Pandemic

This pandemic will end. People are starting to go outside. People will be reunited with loved ones. The world might not look like it did before Spring 2020, but there will still be plenty of joy and happiness and love. Knowing what to do can help you and your family get through this crisis. Then, you will always remember what you did to help.

