

Doctor Safety  
in

DO I NEED AN  
ANTIBIOTIC?

**Do I need an antibiotic?**  
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The Elsevier Foundation and the World Patients Alliance joined forces to launch an inspiring children's book series dedicated to patient safety. This initiative aims to boost the health literacy of school children by introducing them to fundamental concepts and principles of patient safety. By educating young readers, the series aspires to cultivate a generation that values and practices safer care. Moreover, as children share their newfound knowledge with their families, the initiative hopes to create a lasting positive impact on communities, empowering individuals to prioritize patient safety in their everyday lives.

It's a beautiful sunny day, and Tobias is excited to join his friends at the beach. They had planned this trip for days. Tobias is very happy because he loves playing in the sand and swimming in the sea. But suddenly, he starts to feel a tickle in his throat and... cough, cough, cough.

"Oh no, a cough! Of all days, today!" Tobias thinks.





Afraid of missing the day at the beach, Tobias decides to handle the cough on his own. He goes to the medicine cabinet at home and finds a bottle of medicine labelled "ANTIBIOTIC."



"This should do the trick," Tobias thinks as he opens the bottle.

Suddenly, he is startled by a green flash! It's Doctor Safety!

– Hold on, Tobias! Is that the right medicine?

Tobias is surprised. "Why? Won't it help with the cough?"

– Not all coughs are the same. Coughs can have many causes, such as allergies, asthma, or germs like viruses and bacteria. The cough you're experiencing is probably a cold you caught at school. Colds are caused by viruses and can't be cured with antibiotics.



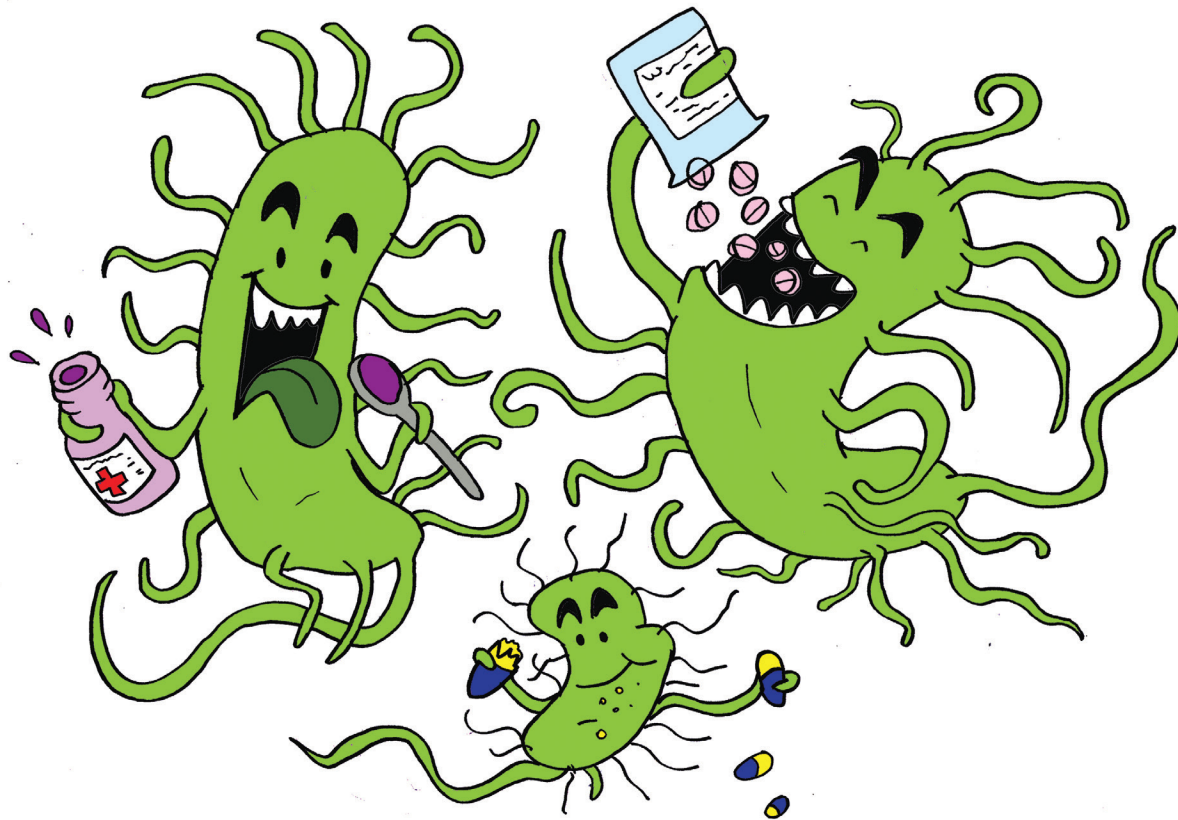
Tobias looks confused. Doctor Safety decides to explain further.

“Bacteria are tiny living things that live all around and inside us. We can’t see them because they’re so small! Some bacteria are helpful, but others can make us sick. Antibiotics are special medicines that fight bad bacteria and help us get better – but only if we take them the right way!”



“Viruses are even smaller than bacteria. They sneak into our cells and turn them into virus factories, making us feel sick. But guess what? Antibiotics don’t work on viruses. Our immune system is the real superhero that fights them off!”





Doctor Safety says: "Taking antibiotics when you don't need them or not finishing them can make bacteria stronger and smarter. This is called antimicrobial resistance. It means bacteria learn to fight back against medicine, making it harder for us to treat infections in the future."



Tobias thinks for a minute.

– Doctor Safety, I think I'd better tell my mom about the cough. I don't want to take the wrong medicine.



– Well done, Tobias! Now you know the differences between viruses and bacteria, and how important it is to only take antibiotics when needed. Welcome to the Safety League!



Before Tobias can say another word,  
Doctor Safety vanishes in a flash of  
green, as suddenly as she had come.



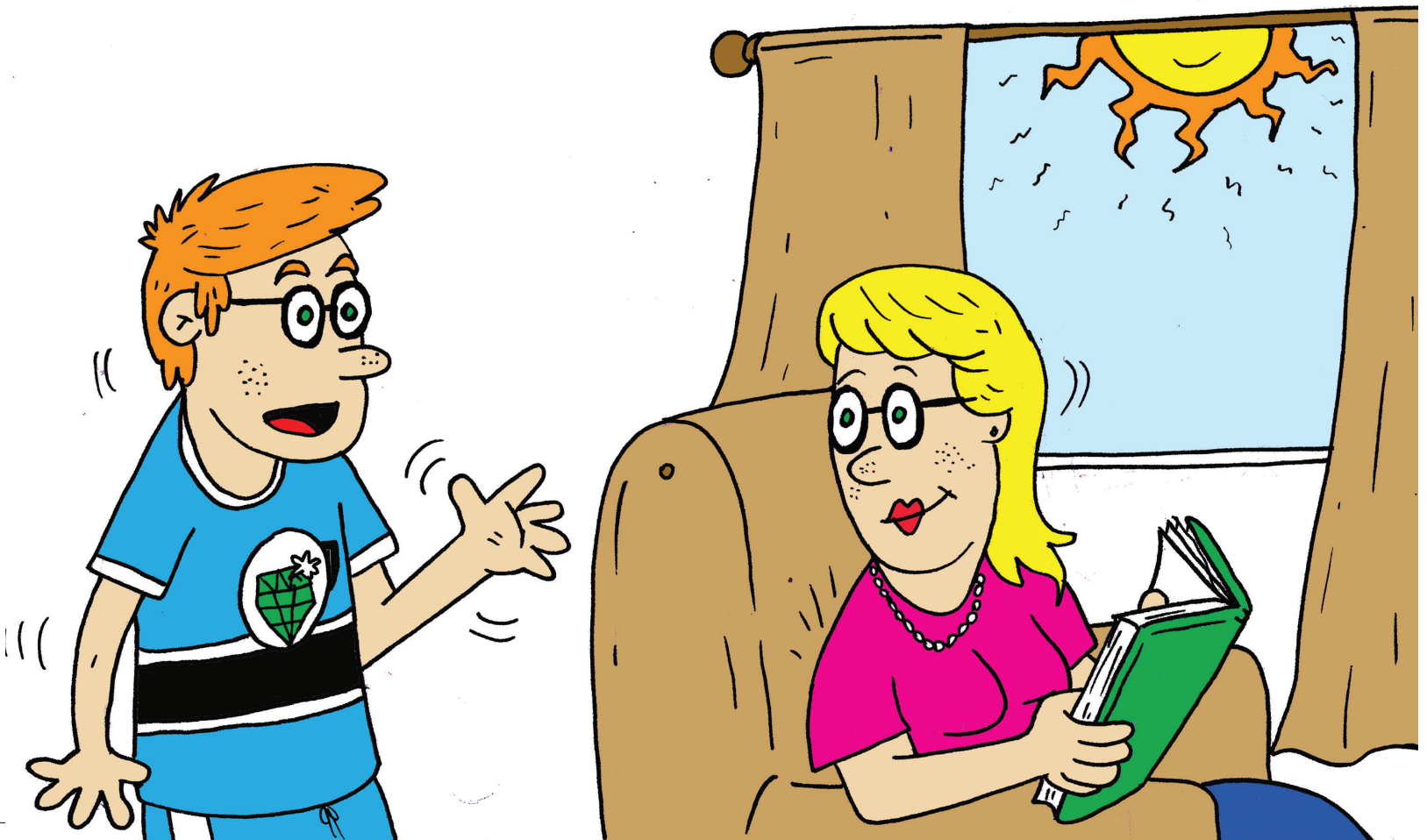


On the floor where she had been standing is a shiny badge marked "Safety Champion."

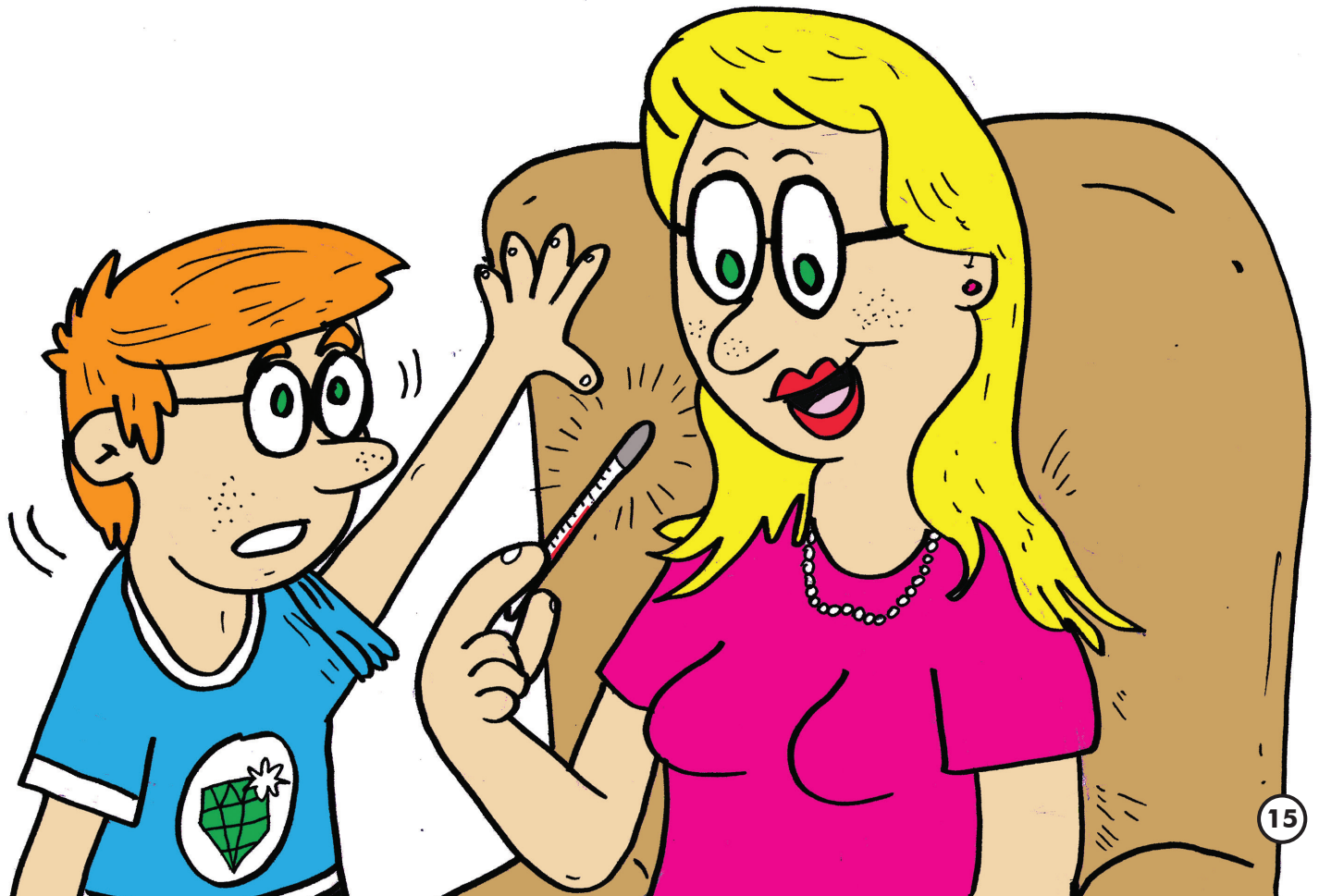


Tobias finds his mom in the living room.

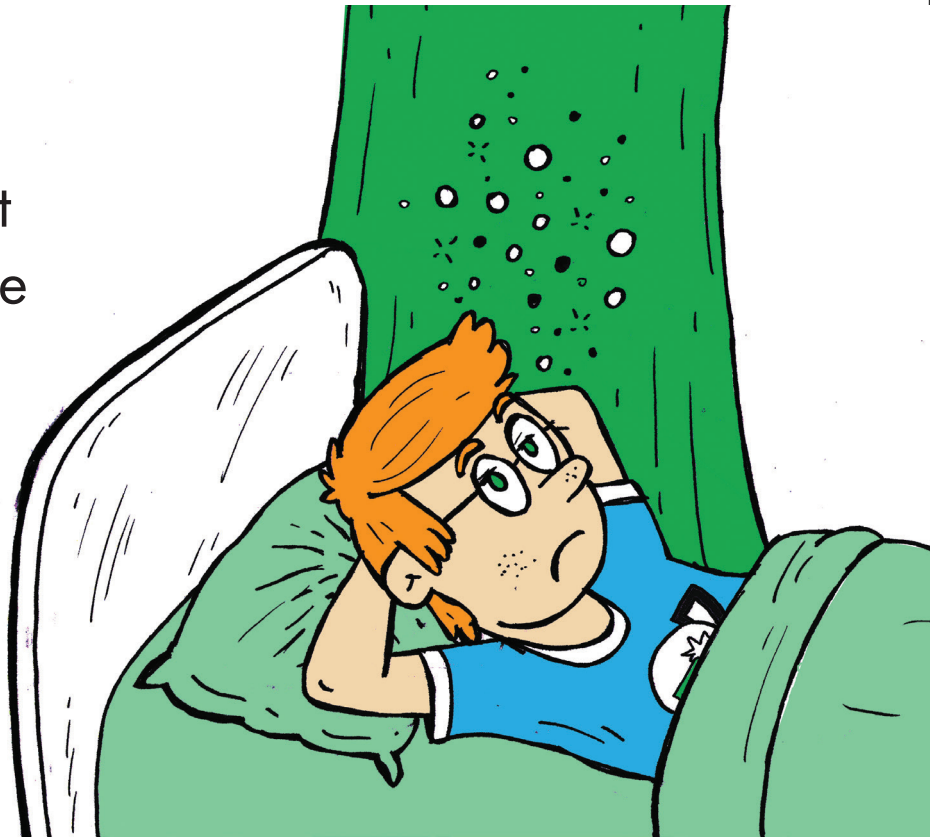
– Mom, I have a cough.



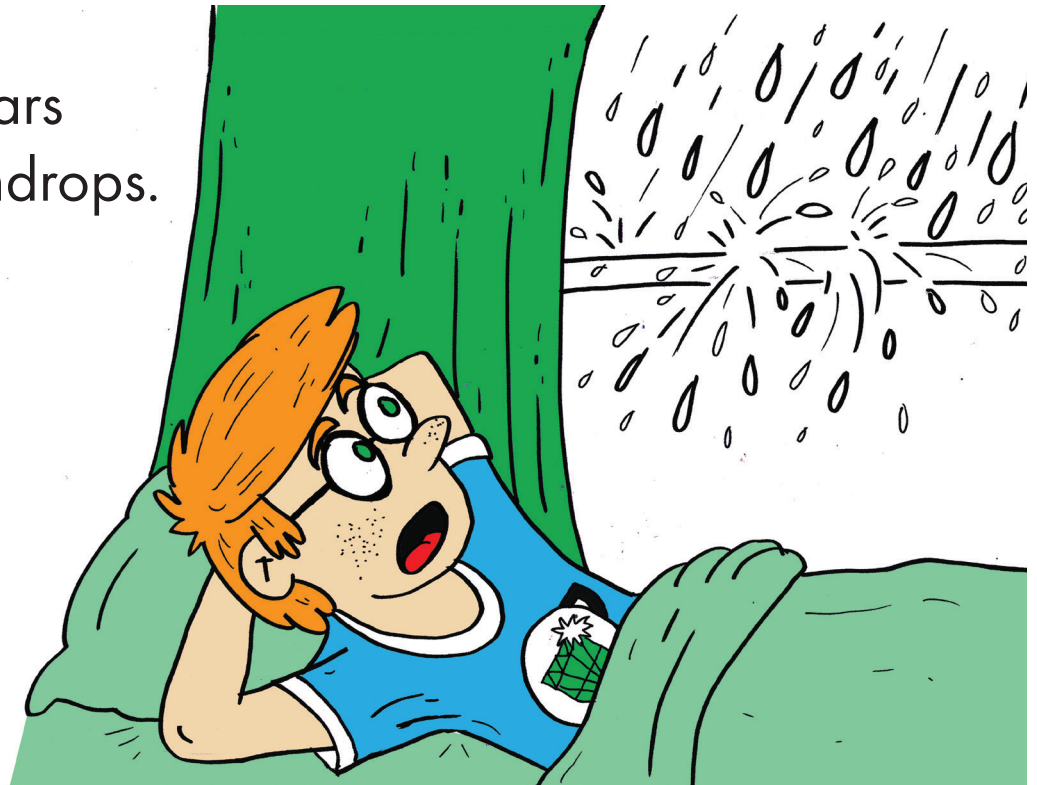
Tobias's mom checks his temperature and asks if he's feeling anything else. Tobias says no. "Then it's better to rest, drink a lot of water and see how you feel later," says his mom.



Tobias is upset about missing the day at the beach. He goes to bed and tries to rest.



Suddenly, he hears the sound of raindrops. It starts to rain!



"Whew! Our day at the beach will be postponed!"  
thinks Tobias.

His mom says: "Don't worry, Tobias. We'll go to  
the beach another day, once you feel better."

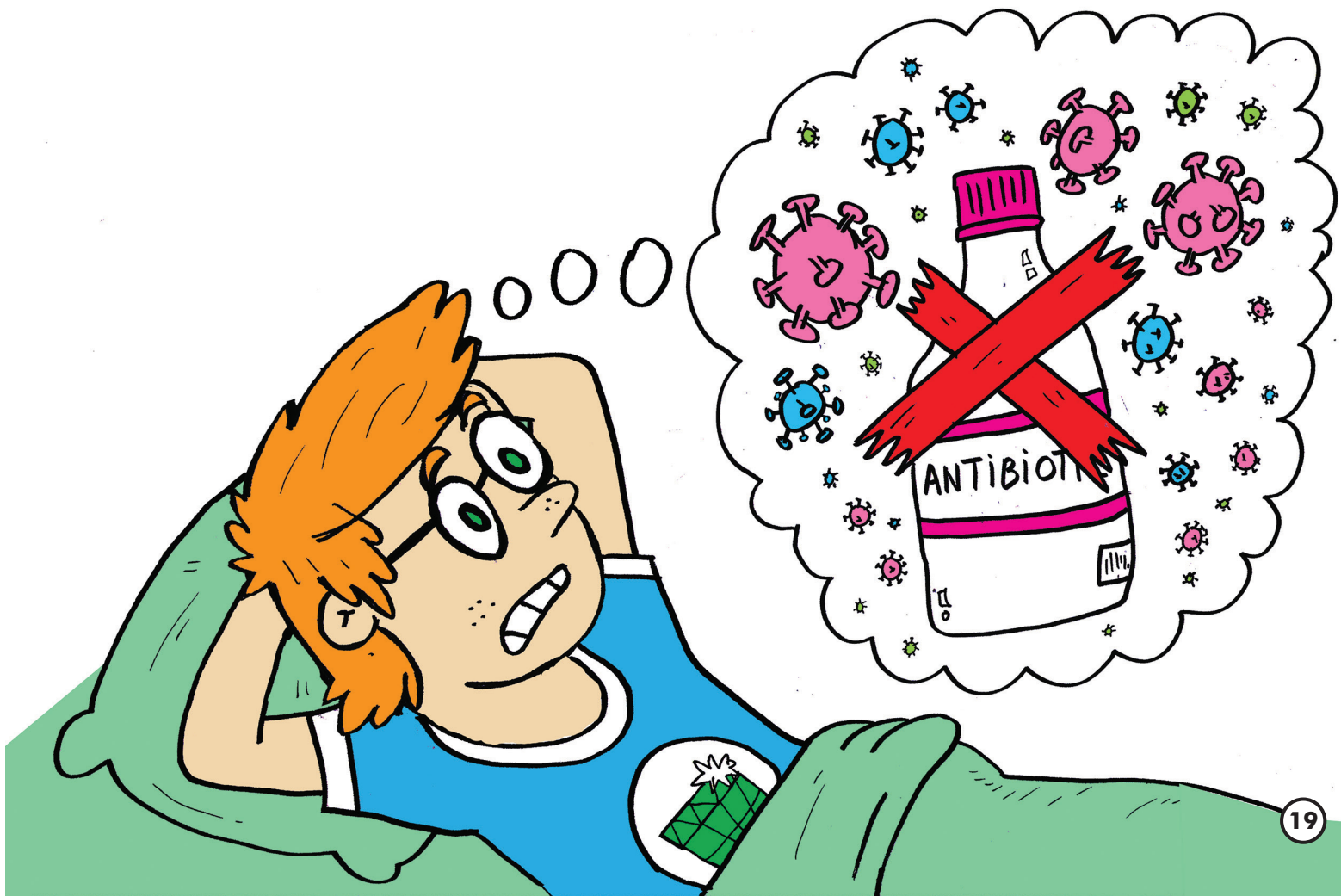




Lying in bed and listening to the rain, Tobias thinks about all he has learned. He has learned that it's important to take only the right medicine to help avoid antimicrobial resistance...



...and that antibiotics are used to fight bacteria and shouldn't be taken for illnesses caused by viruses, like colds or the flu.



Thanks to Doctor Safety and his mother,  
Tobias now knows he can recover and  
still enjoy the beach another day!

