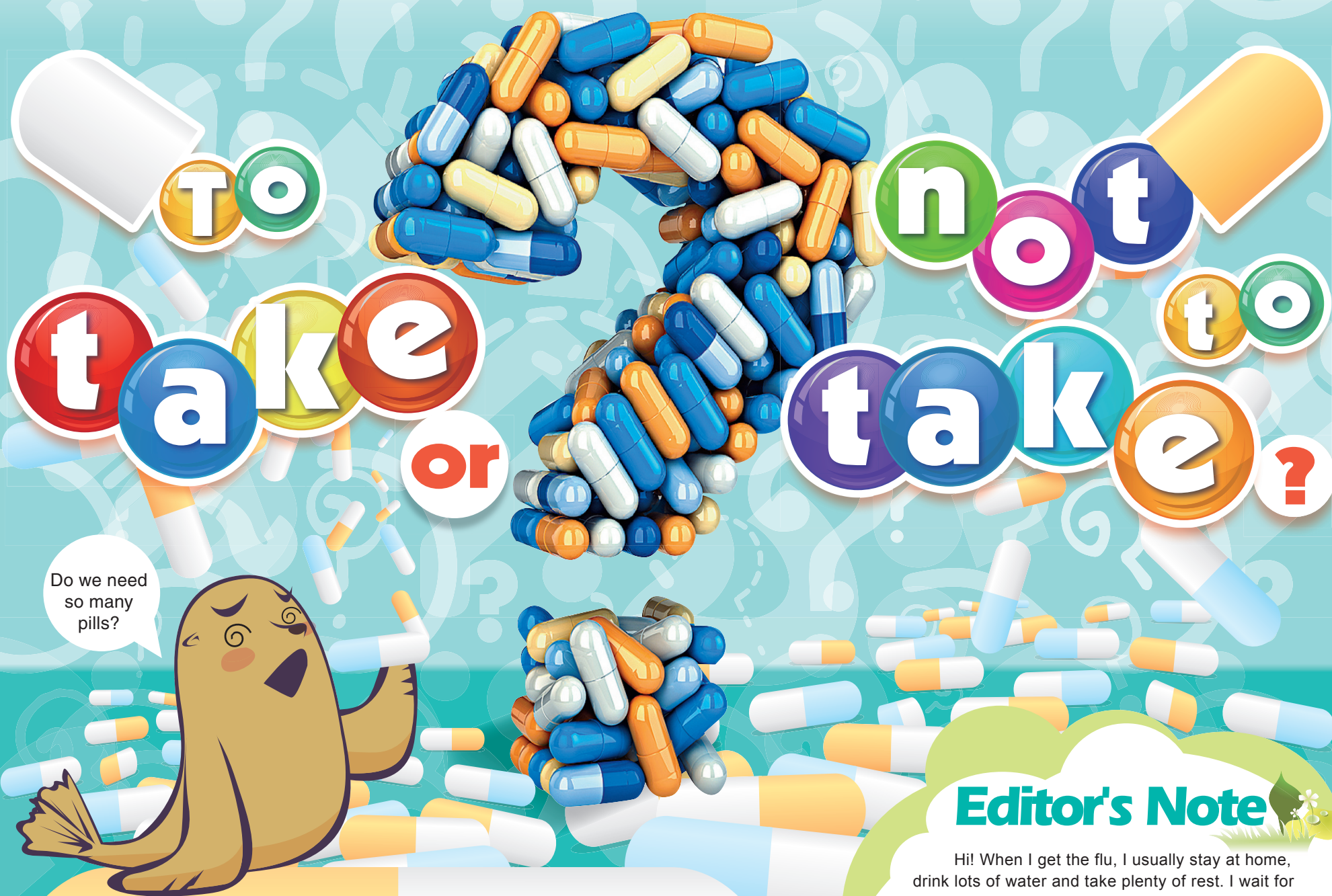


Goodies



Editor's Note

Hi! When I get the flu, I usually stay at home, drink lots of water and take plenty of rest. I wait for three days for the virus to leave my body. Last winter, the flu was very serious so we should all be very careful and do not spread our germs; you need to stay at home and wear a face mask if you go out. This year, hand, foot and mouth disease spread at many kindergartens, and even I had it too. It was very painful and I had to see a doctor who gave me antibiotics. I normally do not take antibiotics when I am sick, but in that case I had to. If you get this disease, always listen to your doctor for advice. Turn to G10 to read a letter from a girl who got it too.



Simon

THAT is the question for Stevie. Poor Stevie has conjunctivitis (結膜炎, 俗稱「紅眼症」)! His mum took him to see a doctor, and he was given antibiotics (抗生素). But he has just heard the top microbiologist (微生物學家), Professor Yuen Kwok-yung (袁國勇), saying we should use antibiotics wisely. Stevie is confused. Have you ever had antibiotics? Do you know how they work and why we need to use them carefully?



What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are a type of medicine. They destroy bacteria (細菌) that make you sick. Antibiotics work very well against harmful bacteria, but they cannot kill viruses (病毒).

How do they work?

Imagine that your body is a kingdom. You have an army called the immune system (免疫系統) to **defend** you against an **invasion** from harmful bacteria which are your enemies. When your enemies are too strong, you need extra help so you need antibiotics (extra soldiers) to kill harmful bacteria cells. Some common **infections** that antibiotics can treat are middle ear infection (中耳炎) and tonsillitis (扁桃腺炎).

But, medicines will help Stevie to recover quickly.



I had conjunctivitis and it vanished after a week without medication!



Why taking too much antibiotics is bad?

Your immune system can **fight off** harmful bacteria, but too much antibiotics will actually make bacteria stronger. We do not want harmful bacteria to learn how to defend themselves against antibiotics. But this will be the case if we keep taking antibiotics.

Why is the city's top microbiologist concerned?

Professor Yuen Kwok-yung says some doctors in Hong Kong **prescribe** antibiotics unnecessarily. He suggests that doctors carry out a blood test (a small amount of blood taken from a finger **prick**). It takes only one minute to tell if a patient requires antibiotics or not. Not all doctors agree with the suggestion because the blood test costs HK\$200 on average and not every patient is willing to pay.



When are antibiotics important?

You definitely need antibiotics if you have a serious illness such as meningitis or pneumonia because they could save your life. But if your doctor says you have something not as serious, such as a common cold, he or she will say it is unnecessary to take antibiotics. Instead let your immune system take care of the virus, and always drink plenty of water and take lots of rest.



What should you avoid drinking before and after taking medicines?



Water



Coffee



Alcohol

Answer on G12

