

HIV, AIDS and ARVs

Psychosocial Centre



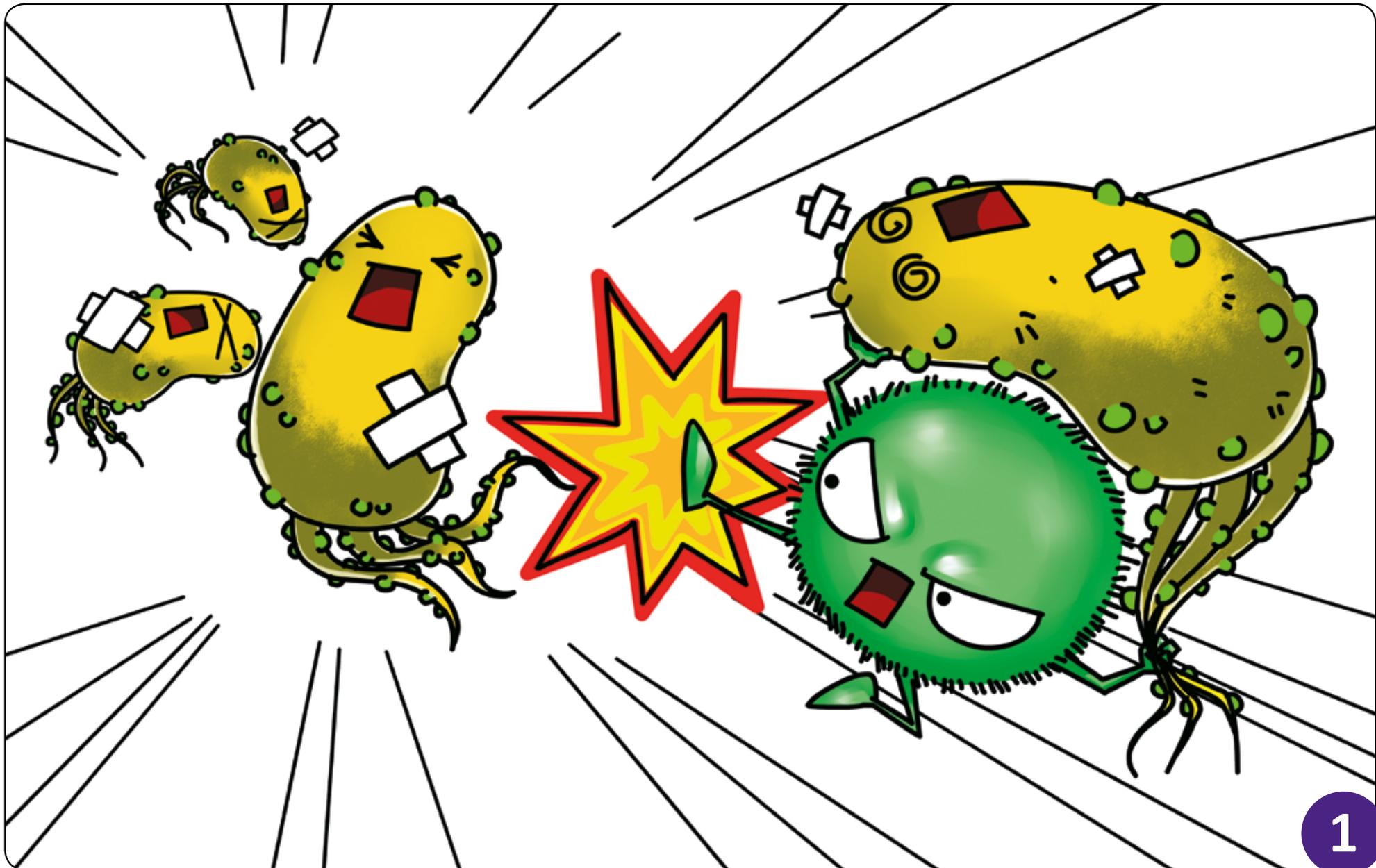
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Save the Children

Inside our bodies we have many different cells. These cells all have different functions. There are some very special cells that are there to protect us from getting sick. They are part of what is called the IMMUNE SYSTEM. These cells are called CD4 cells or T-Cells. They fight off germs and bacteria keeping us safe from disease and infection.

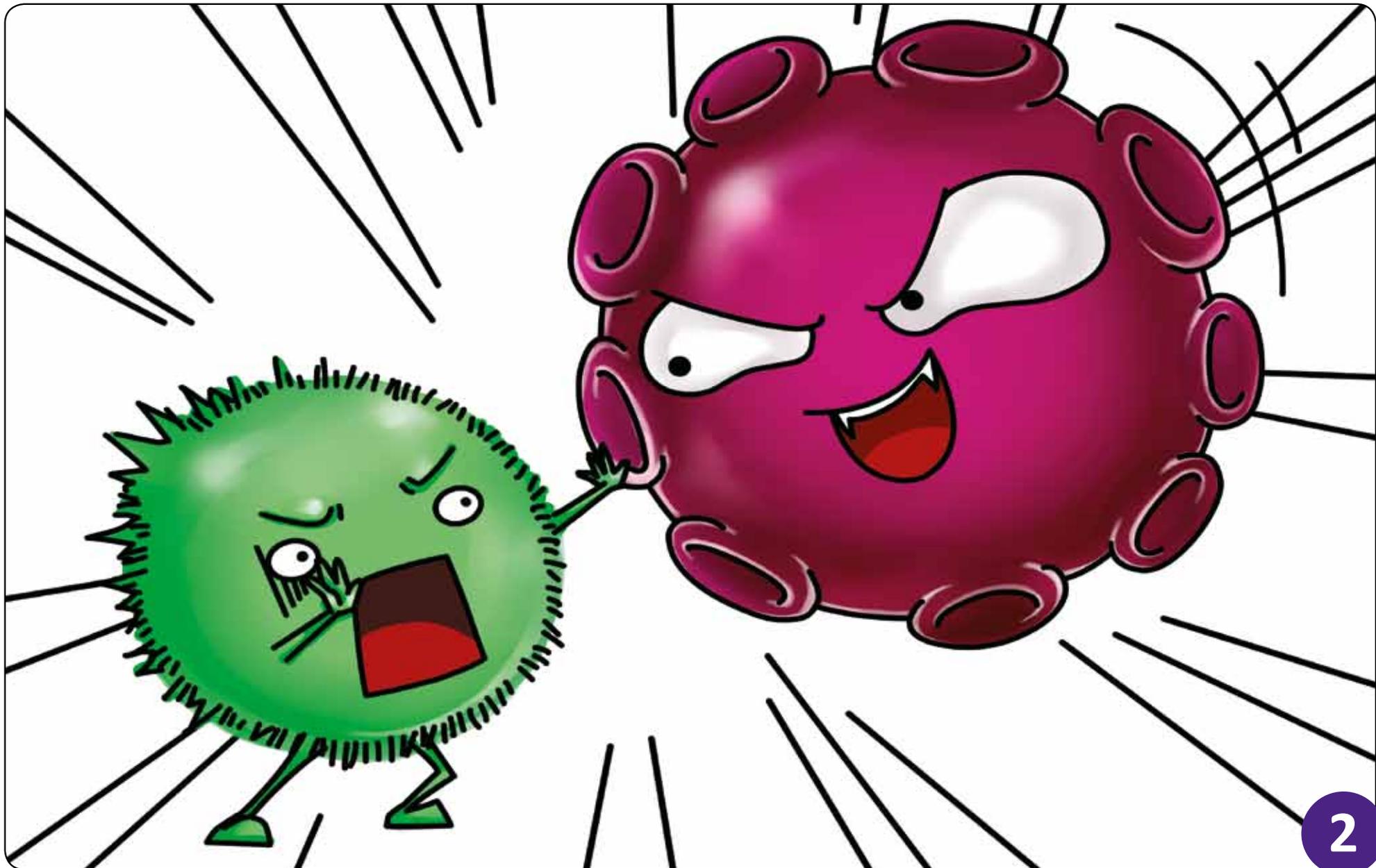




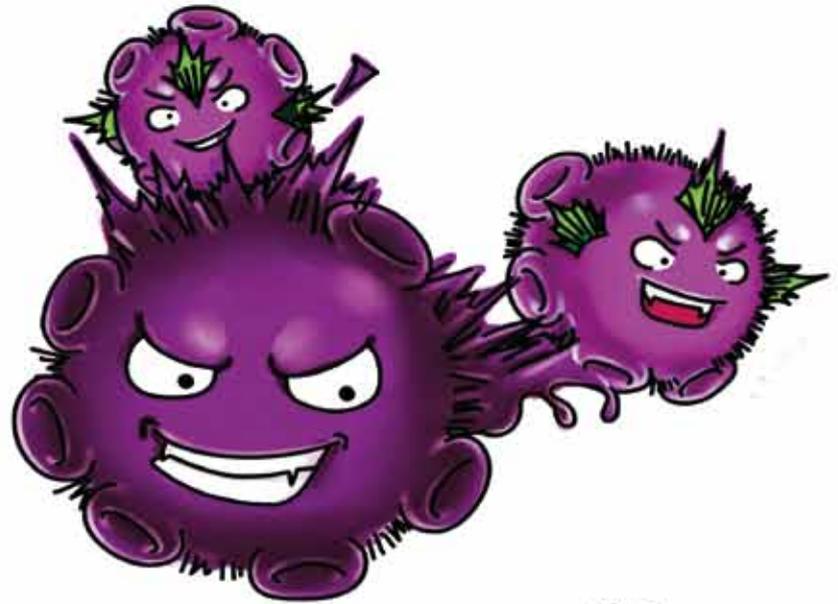
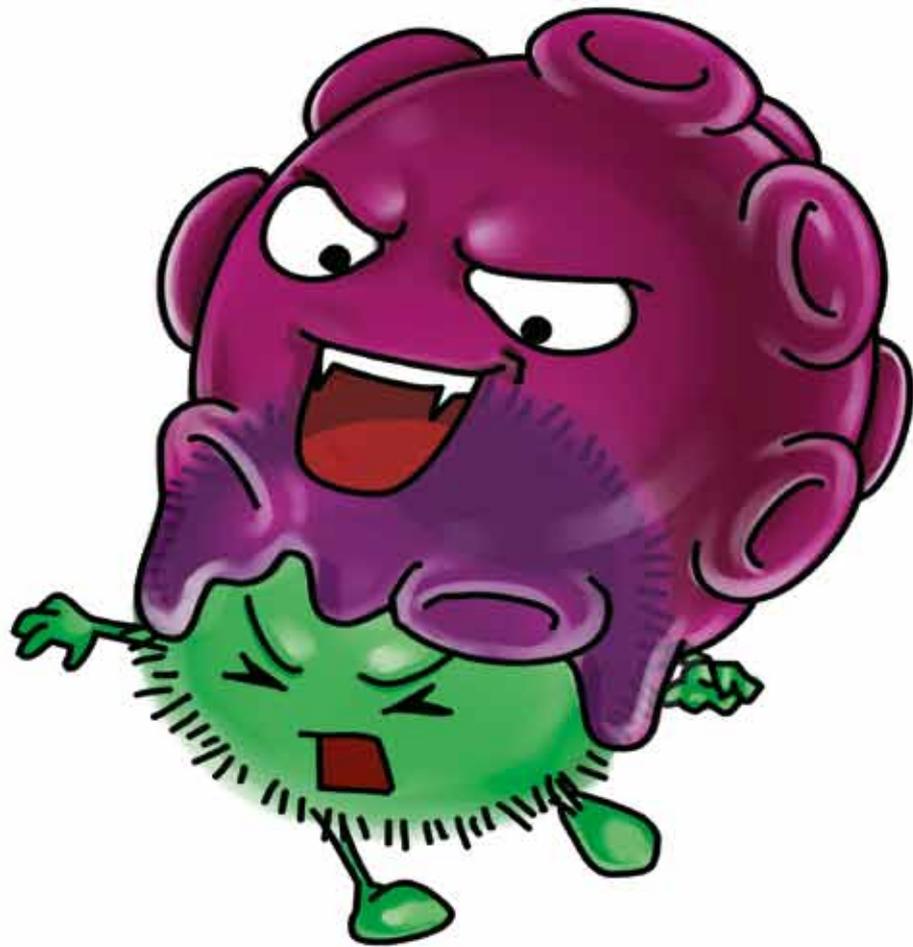
Sometimes, however, the protector cells are overpowered by invading cells. This happens if the invading cells are a lot stronger than the T-cells, or if the T-cells are not trained to fight against the special tricks the invader cells have. The HIV virus cells are like this. These cells are so strong that the T-cells in our bodies do not know how to fight them on their own.

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus – which means:

- H** Human - this virus can only infect human beings
- I** Immunodeficiency – it is a virus that weakens your immune system by destroying the cells that fight disease and infection. The particular cells it attacks are called the T-cells or CD4 cells
- V** Virus – when a person is infected with a virus it means that they have received these cells from another source, and the virus grows and reproduces by taking over cells in the body.

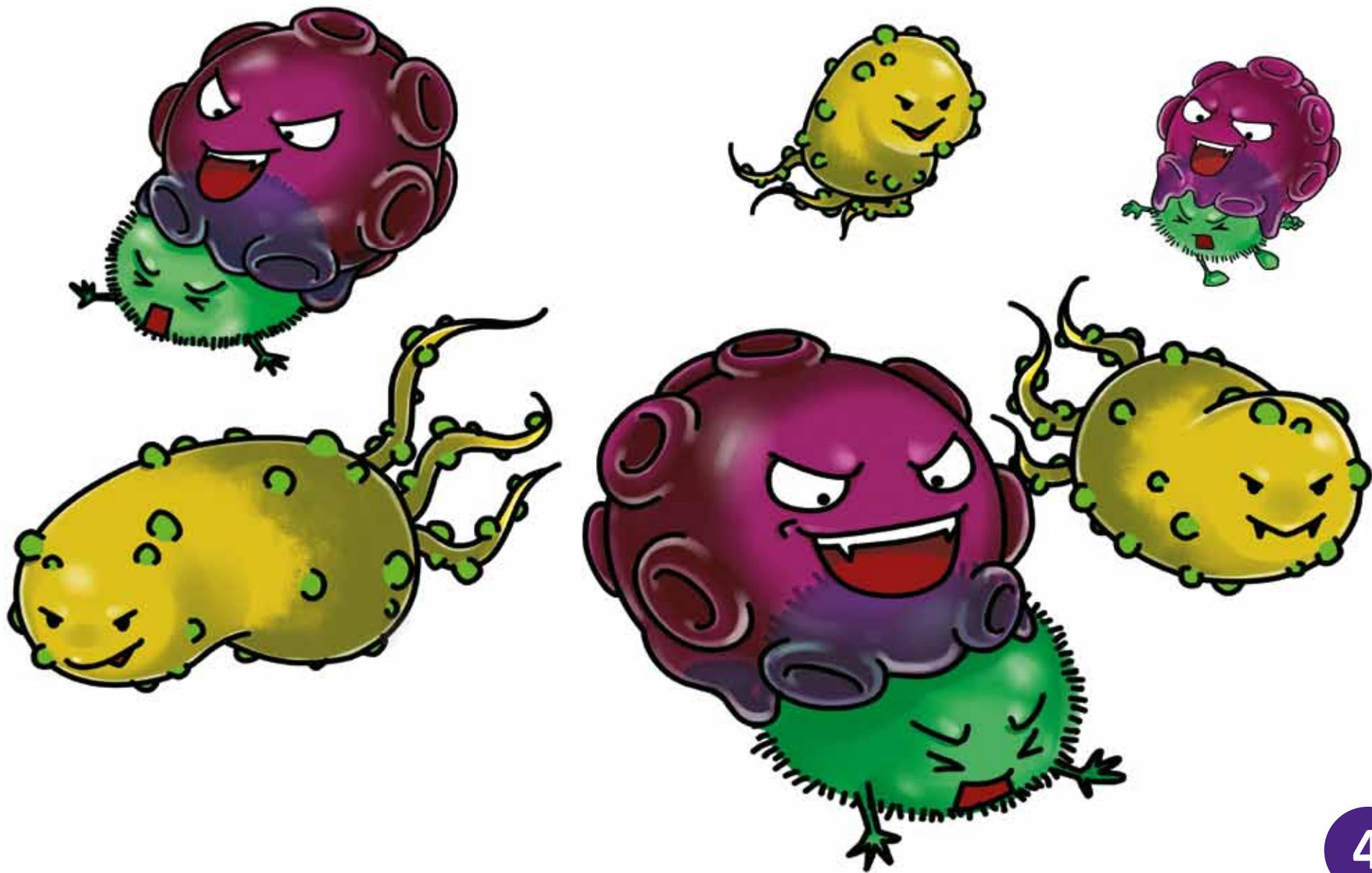


When the HIV virus enters our bodies and attacks the T-cells, it starts using the T-cells as its home and from here it is able to reproduce, and make more and more HIV virus cells. Each of these new HIV virus cells then attacks a new T-cell, and with time, they take over so many of the T-cells that the immune system becomes very weak.





As the T-cells are taken over by the HIV virus, they are no longer able to protect the body from the diseases and infections that they were able to before. Now the bacteria and germs that were once stopped from making the person's body ill, are able to thrive.

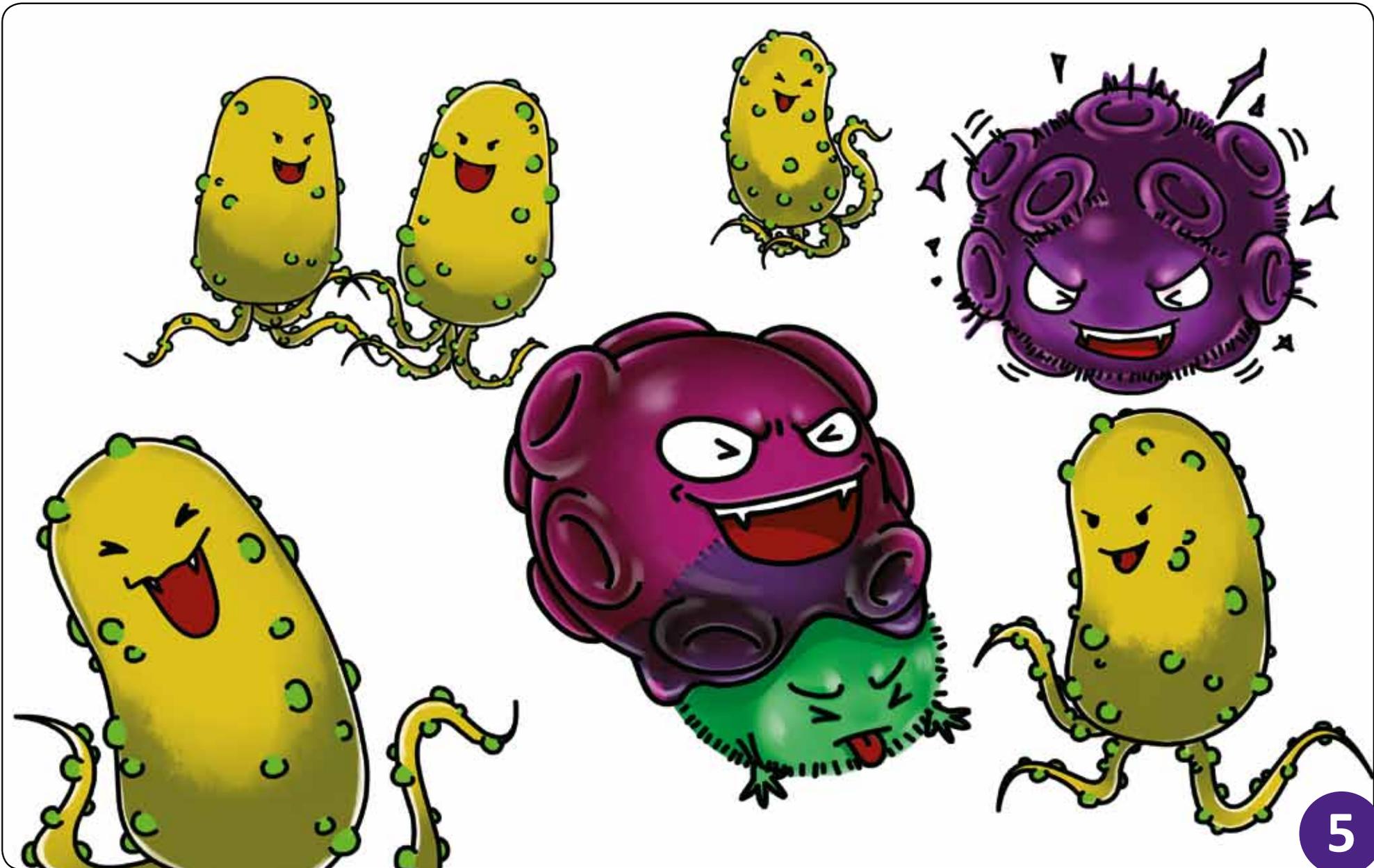


When the immune system has been taken over by bad cells that make us sick, this is when a person is said to have AIDS.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome

- A** Acquired – this means it is something that has developed – it is not something you are born with
- I** Immuno – the immunity system
- D** Deficiency – means the immunity system is not working the way it should
- S** Syndrome – a syndrome is a collection of signs and symptoms of diseases. AIDS is not a single disease, but it is when the body's immunity system is so weak that many diseases have been able to affect the body and weaken it.

A person is said to have AIDS when the HIV virus has managed to spread so much that the person has many infections and diseases at the same time.



Unfortunately there is no cure for the HIV virus yet. This means we have not found out how to kill the HIV virus cells once they have attached themselves to the T-cells. But we have found a way to prevent some of the new HIV virus cells from attaching themselves to the T-cells. This can be done if someone who has the HIV virus takes some medication called ARV.

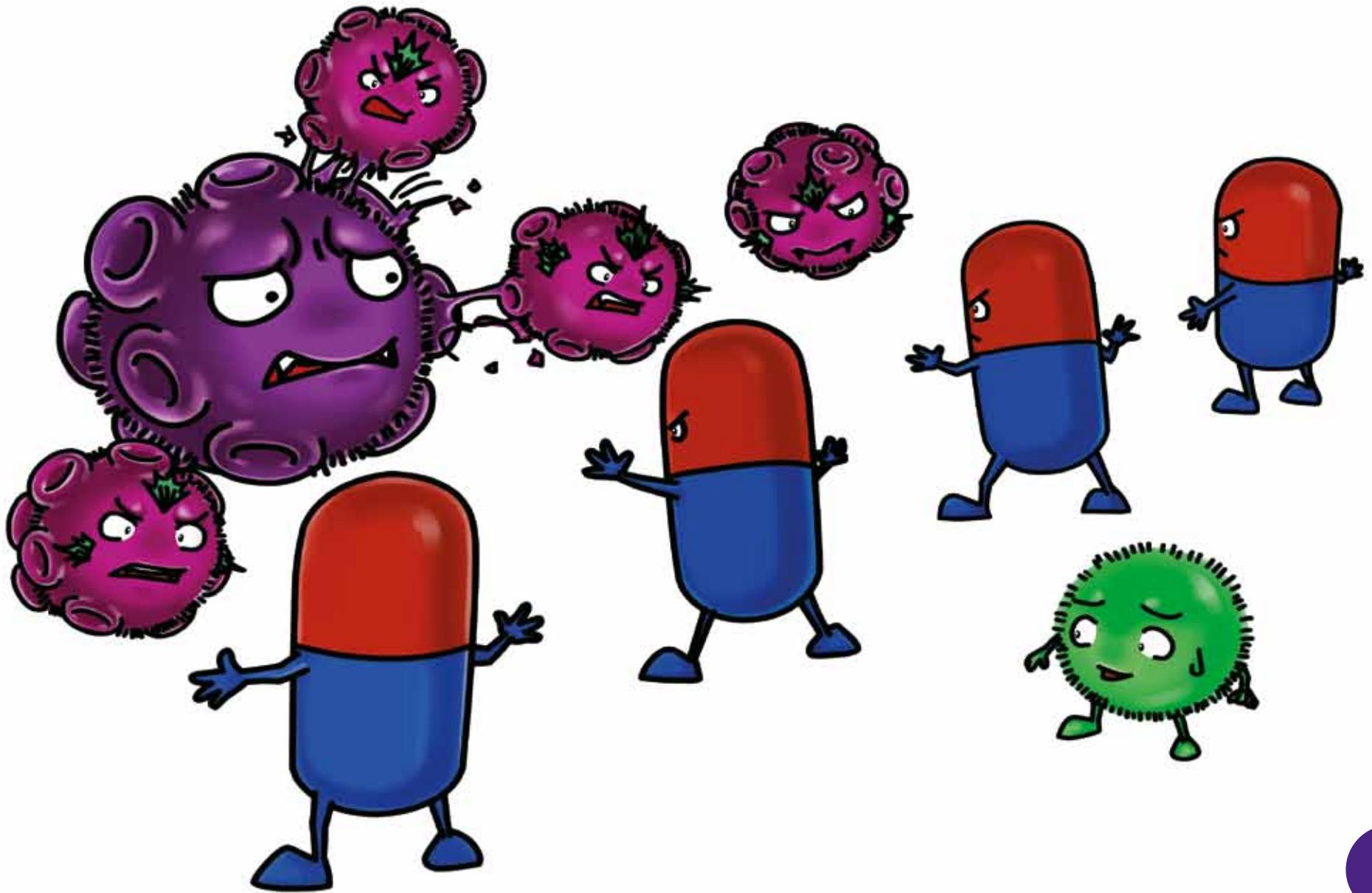
ARV stands for antiretroviral

A: anti - means against

Retroviral: is the particular kind of virus that HIV is.

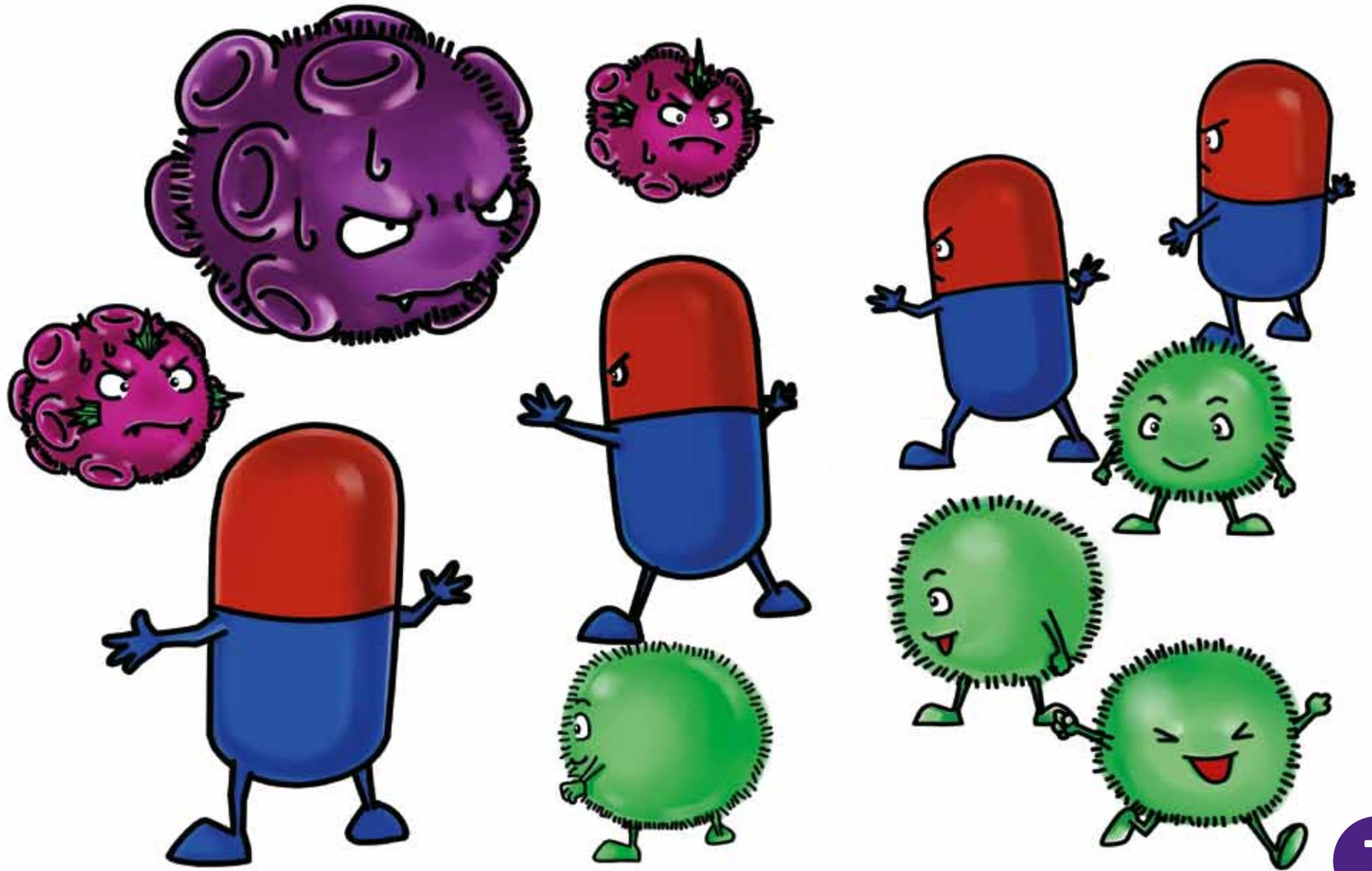
A difficulty in preventing the new HIV virus cells from attacking T-cells is that the HIV virus mutates all the time. This means that it changes a little bit every time it reproduces. That means we need different kinds of ARV medication, to try to block the different types of HIV virus cells. This is why people who take ARV medication often have to take two or three or even four different kinds of ARV at the same time, to try and block the different kinds of HIV virus cells.

When you start taking ARV medication, you have to keep taking the medication for the rest of your life, because the HIV virus will always be in your body.

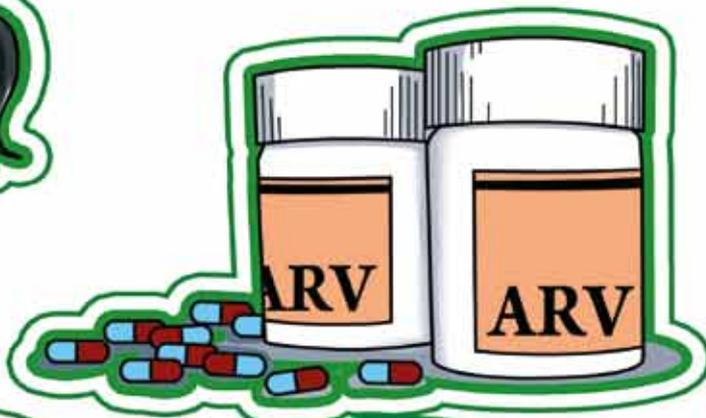


When a person takes their ARV medication as they should, they are usually able to be as strong and healthy as someone who does not have the HIV virus. But it is important that they always take their ARV medication on time, and they make sure to keep healthy and strong in other ways.

Ask the children what other things people can do to keep strong and healthy? Show the next card after they have answered.



Yes, to keep healthy and strong, we need to eat healthy foods, drink clean water, exercise, sleep and keep clean. A person who has HIV must remember to take their ARVs.



THE CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

Psychosocial support in and out of schools

HIV, AIDS and ARVs educational cards

These cards on HIV, AIDS and ARVs are part of the resource kit for the children's resilience programme.

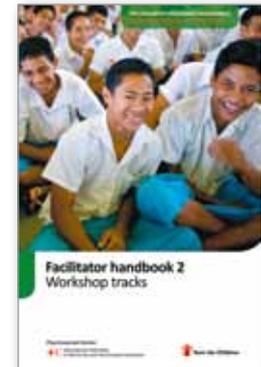
Use the cards by folding the booklet so you can show the children the pictures, while you read the text that goes with the card at the same time.

They are used in activity 6.2 in workshop 6 called 'Understanding HIV and AIDS' in track 4 (see Facilitator handbook 2: Workshop tracks).

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The Children's Resilience Programme, available as a resource kit in English and French, comprises:



The resource kit is available online on www.ifrc.org/psychosocial and www.savethechildren.dk

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