

Boogers at Work



IF YOU'VE EVER blown a snot rocket, had a cold, or picked your nose, you know that your nose is capable of amazing things. What you may not know is that the snot in your nose, whether it's green and slimy or yellow and clumpy, serves an important purpose.

Grownups usually call snot mucus. Goopy, slimy mucus is produced by organs throughout your body. Mucus moistens your food and makes it easier to swallow. It coats and protects your stomach and intestines. And in your nose and respiratory system, mucus helps keep your body germ-free and healthy.

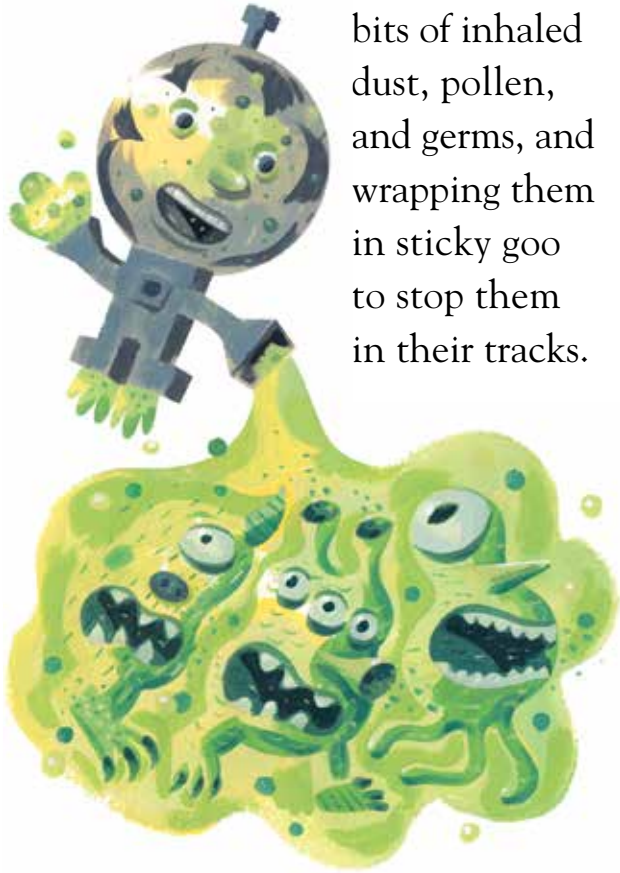
Your nose produces about a cupful of snot every day. This snot, or mucus, lines your nose and throat and acts as a barrier between the outside world and your lungs.

When you breathe in air, you also breathe in tiny bits of dust, dirt, bacteria, and pollen. These foreign particles don't belong in your body. They could hurt your lungs and make it hard for you to breathe.



Uh... Ophelia? How are you feeling?

Mucus's job is to trap the particles before they get down your windpipe and into your lungs. Think of mucus as a catcher's mitt, grabbing the



bits of inhaled dust, pollen, and germs, and wrapping them in sticky goo to stop them in their tracks.

Mucus is helped by tiny hairs inside the nose and throat called cilia. Once the bits of dust and dirt are trapped in slimy mucus, cilia sweep them out of the way. Cilia propel some of the particles down a conveyor belt of snot to the back of

the throat, where they are swallowed and killed by acids in your stomach. Cilia move other bits toward the front of the nose, where they clump together to form . . . boogers.

Boogers come in all shapes and sizes, but each one is essentially a sneaky bit of the outside world that tried to get into your lungs. Your body uses snot to stop these small invaders before they can do any harm. When you blow your nose



Like I wish I could wrap myself in a plastic barrier—something that blocks the way. Maybe THAT would fix my respiratory system—the parts of the body used for breathing.



and expel the boogers, you are helping your body's defense system keep you healthy.

Blowing your nose is one way of getting rid of potentially harmful particles. Sneezing and coughing are other ways. When germs and pollen enter your nasal passages, cilia lining the inside of your nose can become irritated. This causes a tickling sensation, and the nose

defends itself with a sneeze. A good sneeze can blast air out through the mouth and nasal passages at 100 miles per hour—faster than a major league pitcher throws a fastball! No wonder your parents tell you to cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze—the air you expel is filled with snot droplets, bacteria, and boogers.



A cough is like a sneeze that comes from your windpipe and lungs. Your lungs also produce mucus to trap any harmful particles you might breathe in. Cilia in your

I think we've found what you're allergic to...



Down in the basement...



...Actually, it's two things...



Two très cuuuute things.

lungs sweep the mucus into the back of your throat. Sometimes too much mucus collects in your throat, and you can't swallow all of it. You cough to clear your lungs and airway. When you cough up blobs of mucus, you're expelling boogers from your lungs!

Not all mucus dries and clumps into boogers. Some mucus just runs—out your nose, onto the clump of tissues your mom hands you.

Your nose works hard to protect your body, but occasionally bacteria and viruses make it through, and you catch a cold or get the flu. When this happens, your body's mucus-production system goes into overdrive to flush the germs out of your body. The same thing happens to people with allergies. When they breathe in cat dander or plant pollen or mold, their noses react as if these allergens were germs.



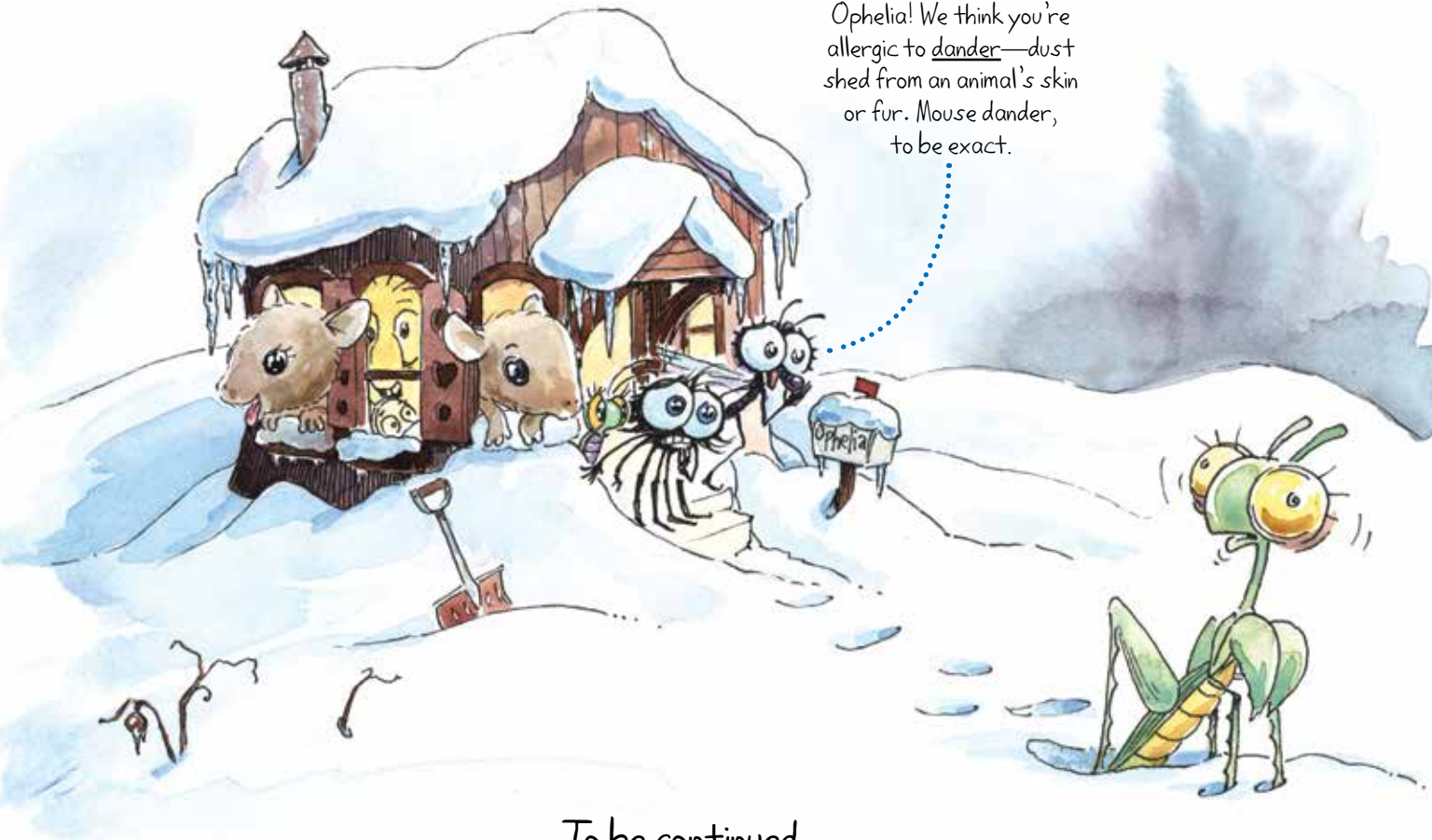
Whatever they are, bring them up and expel them—throw them out—NOW!





Mucus production is increased—and their noses start running as the invading irritants get swept away in a flood of mucus.

So the next time you sneeze or cough or sniff or blow, remember: snot may be gross, but we couldn't live without it. 🐜



Ophelia! We think you're allergic to dander—dust shed from an animal's skin or fur. Mouse dander, to be exact.

To be continued...