

Soft and squishy materials and how to think about them



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<http://media3.s-nbcnews.com/>

Materials



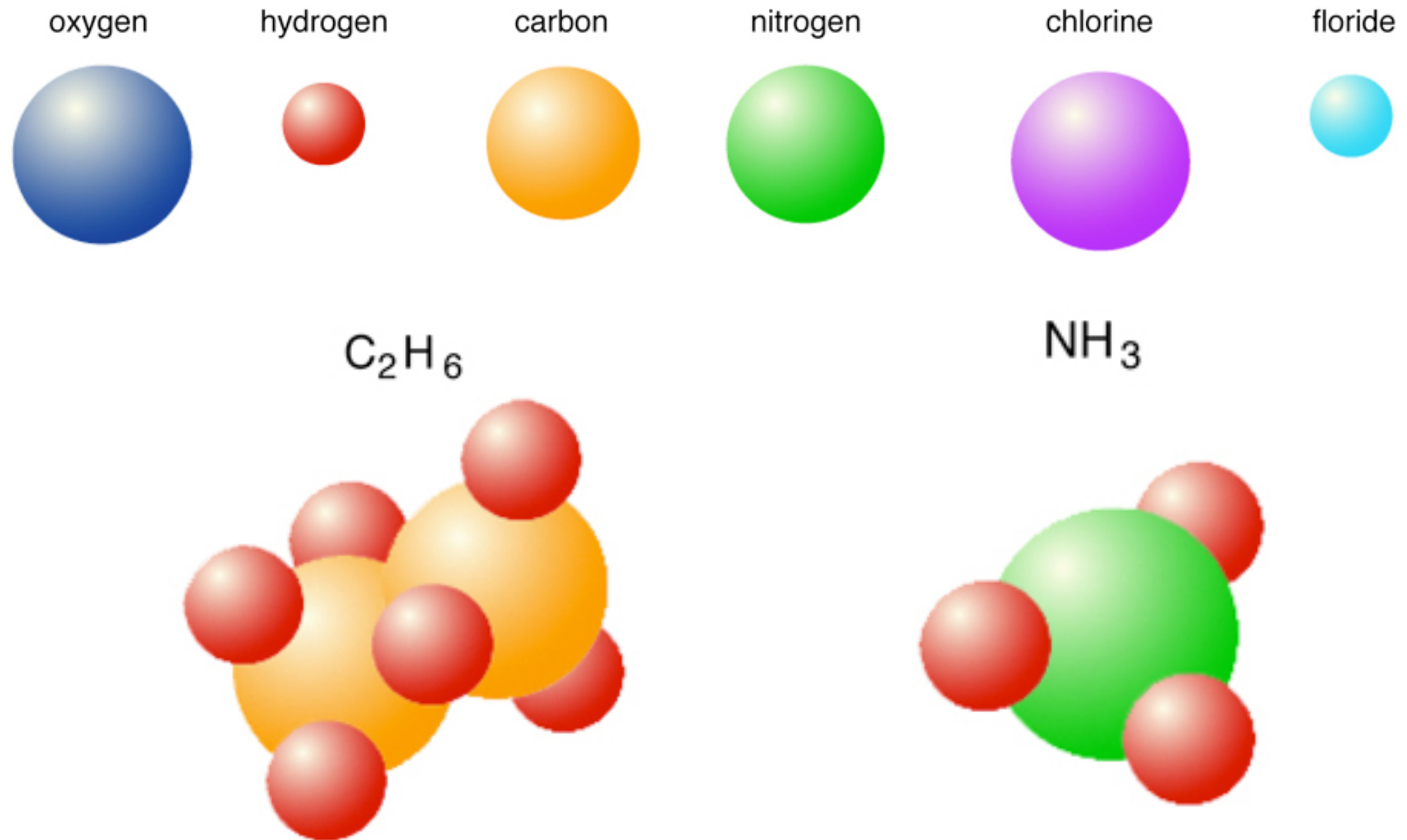
<https://unsplash.com/photos/xzPMUMDDsfk>



Wikipedia

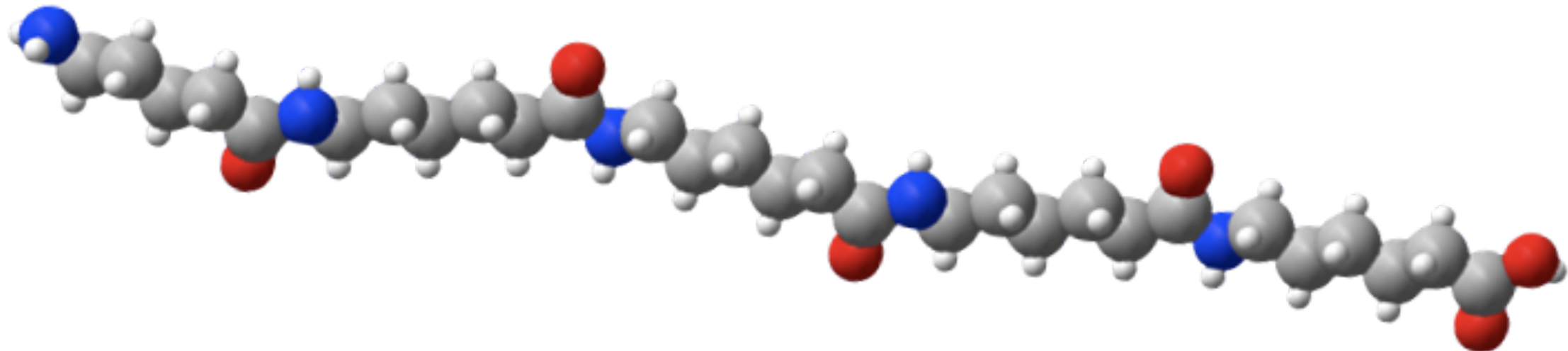
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71
La	Ce	Pr	Nd	Pm	Sm	Eu	Gd	Tb	Dy	Ho	Er	Tm	Yb	Lu
Lanthanum	Cerium	Praseodymium	Neodymium	Promethium	Samarium	Europium	Gadolinium	Terbium	Dysprosium	Holmium	Erbium	Thulium	Ytterbium	Lutetium
89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103
Ac	Th	Pa	U	Np	Pu	Am	Cm	Bk	Cf	Es	Fm	Md	No	Lr
Actinium	Thorium	Protactinium	Uranium	Neptunium	Plutonium	Americium	Curium	Berkelium	Californium	Einsteinium	Fermium	Mendelevium	Nobelium	Lawrencium

Atoms make molecules

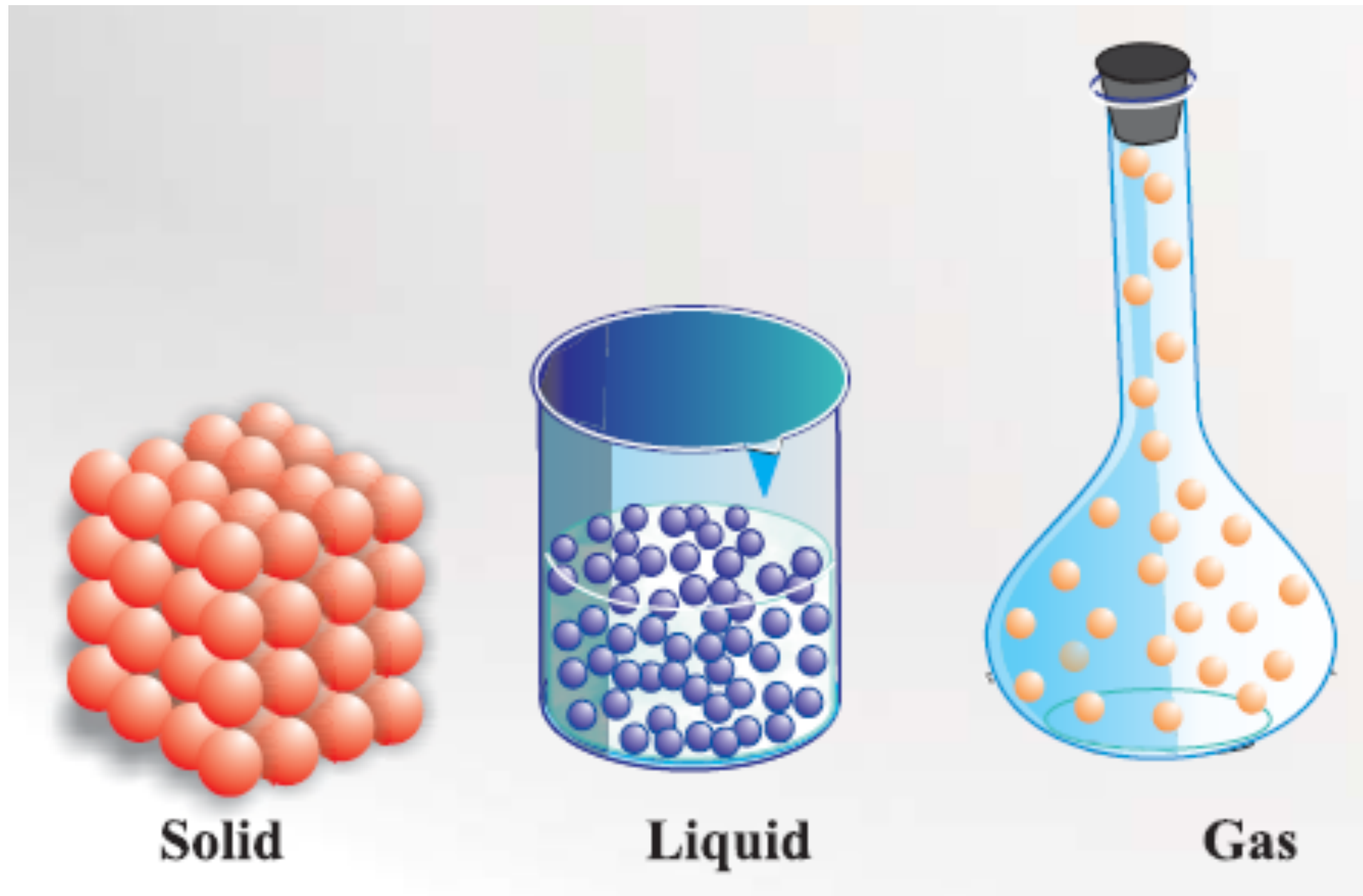


Molecules can be complex

Polymer



Atoms and molecules can be in different physical states IF there are lots of them ⁷



Ask questions about any material

How are atoms linked? Simple molecules?

Long molecules (polymers)?

Is the material a mixture of different molecules?

Is the substance overall solid, liquid or a bit of both?



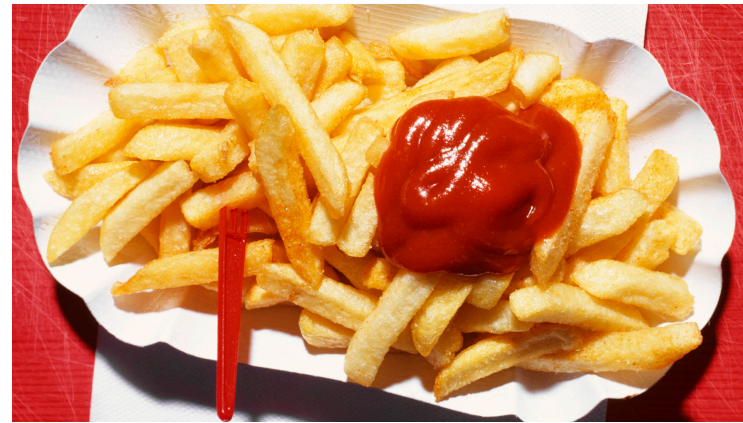
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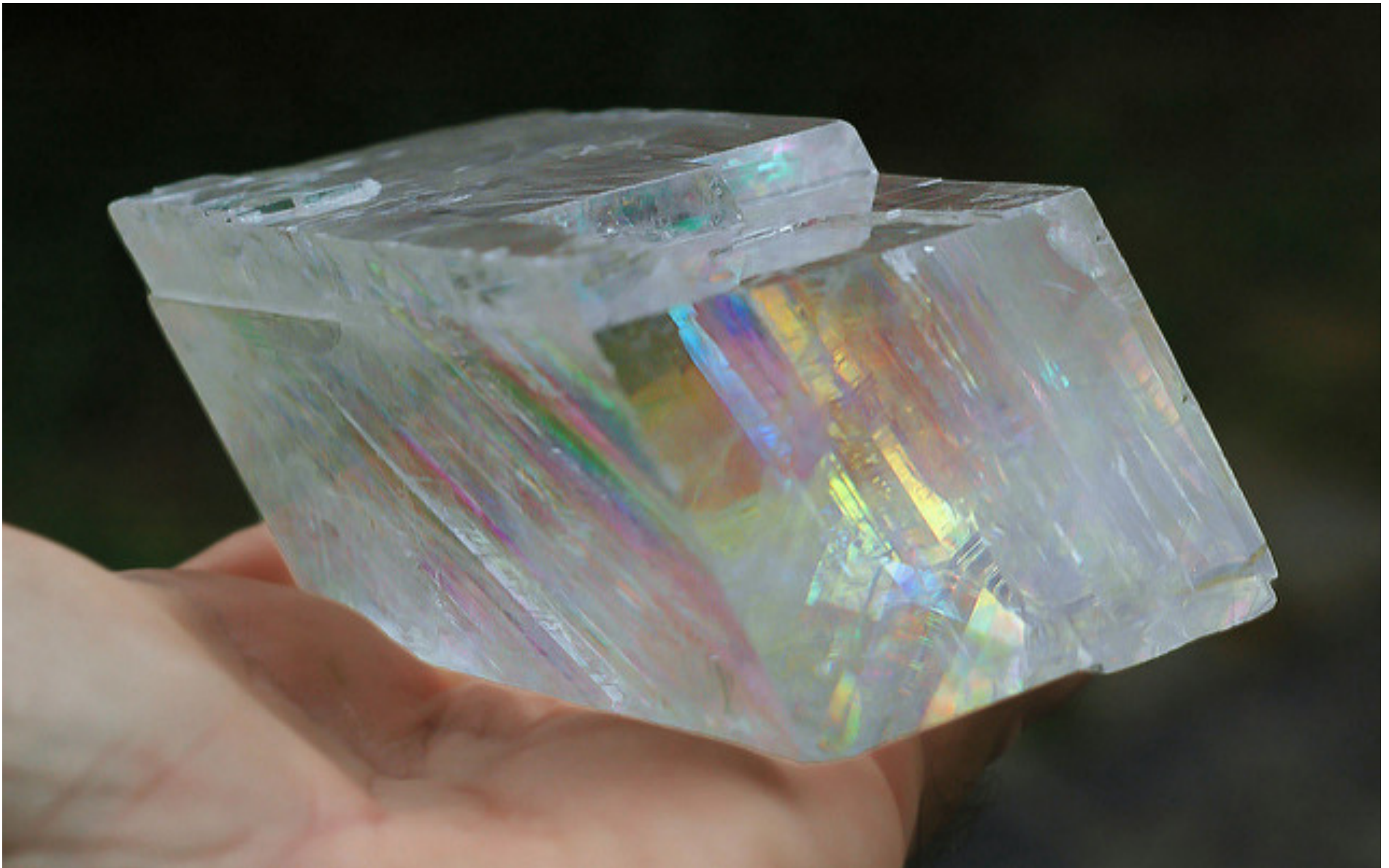
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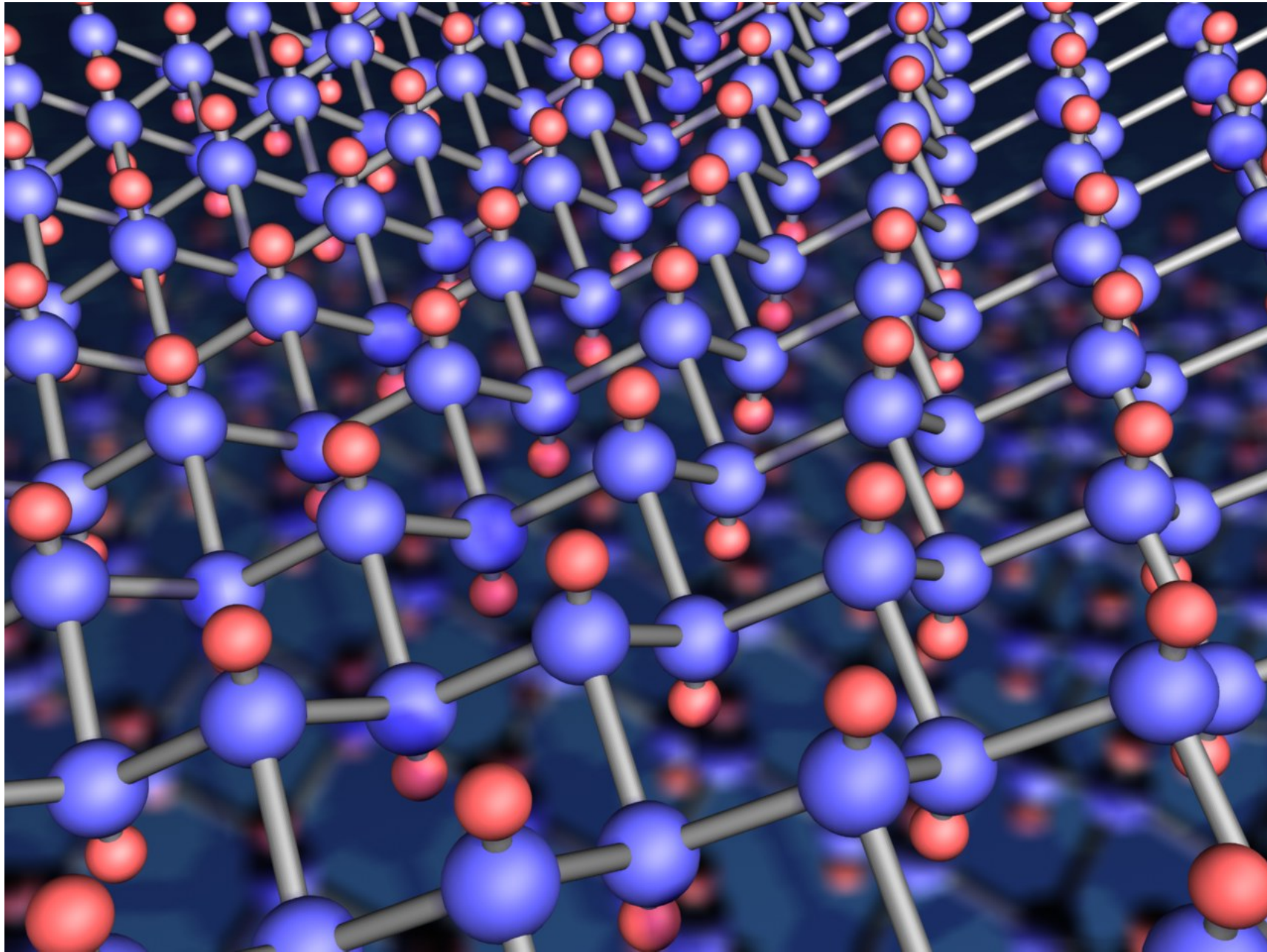
Soft and squishy materials

- Are usually mixtures of different types of atoms and molecules
- Often include long polymers
- Have properties between those of solids and liquids

Solid, inflexible (crystalline) materials



Crystal: Hard to change relative positions of atoms



Solid, inflexible non-crystalline materials



Solid, non-crystalline, flexible materials



Solid, but flexible biological materials



Fluids



Suspensions



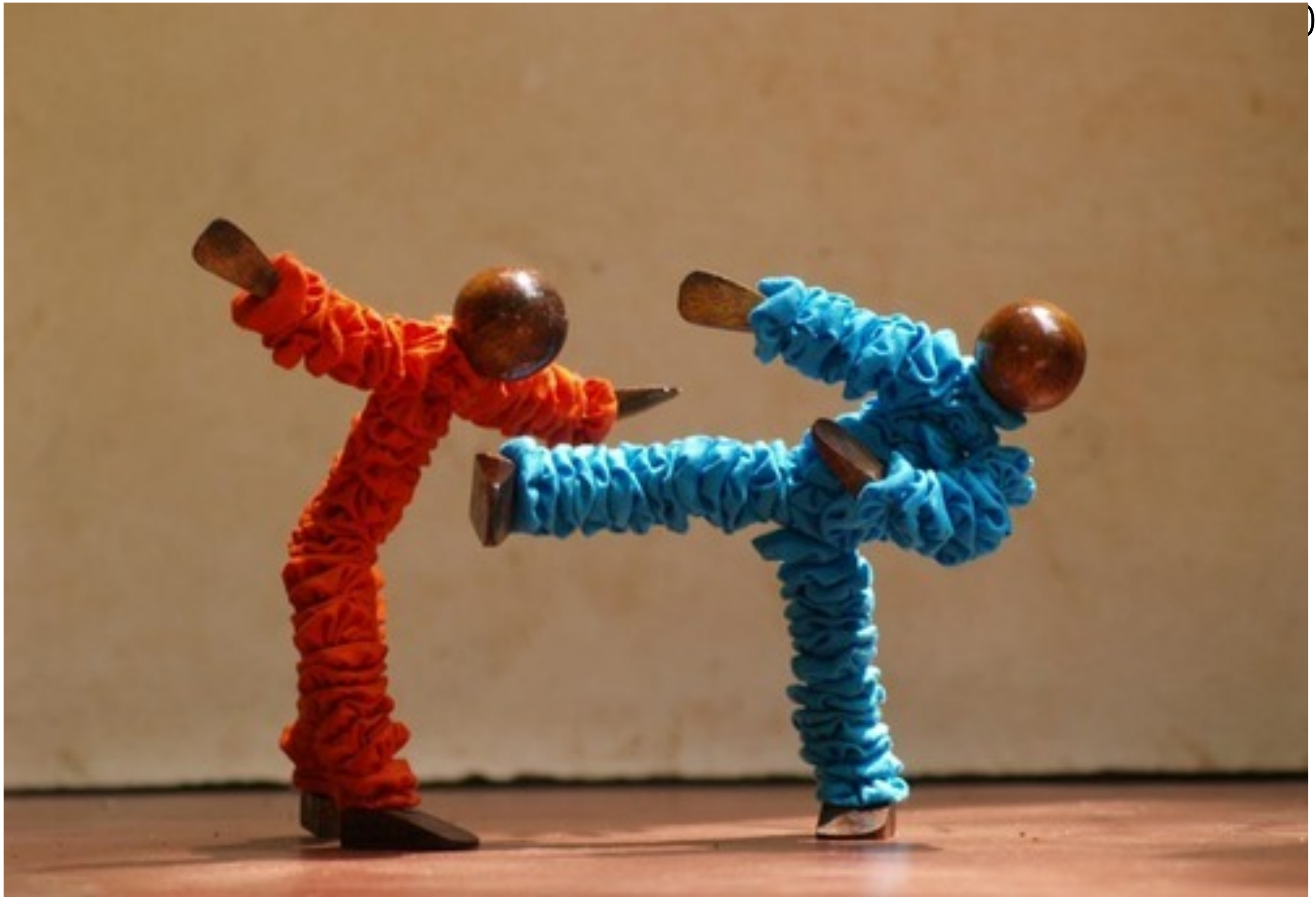


Man-made materials

Get their properties right







A “bendi” toy

But flexible
living materials
can also “grow”



Not just
materials,
information
encoded in
them



<https://www.gettyimages.co.nz/>
<https://i1.wp.com/www.yogabasics.com/>

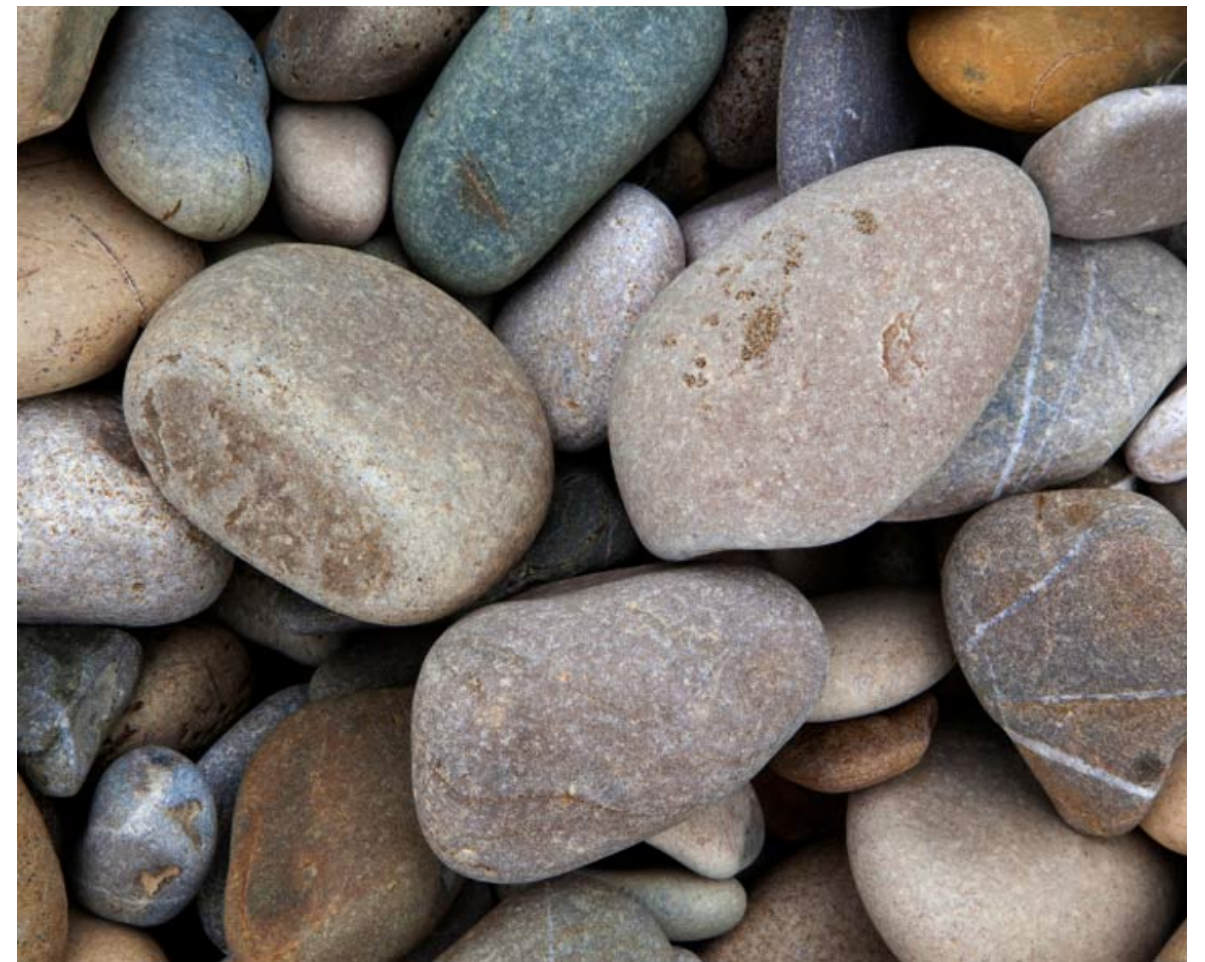


Deformation - a change of shape

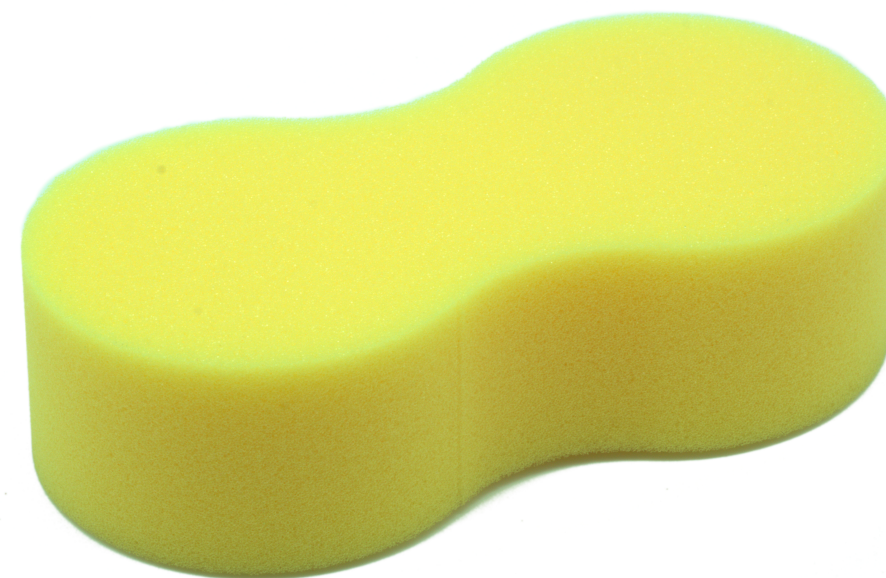
Materials that resist being deformed

Materials that are easy to deform

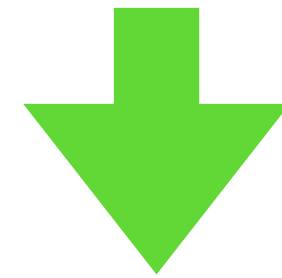
Materials that resist having their shape changed



Materials whose shape can be easily changed



It takes the
“Incredible Hulk” to
deform this



Soft (and squishy)
materials don't need
“Hulk-level” forces to
deform them

How big should the
force be?

The “softer” the
material, the less the
force



Slime



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/3659243425851621/>



<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/1e/06/50/1e0650f63ebd22be9eb7d0ed80f21fdb.jpg>

Elasticity

Materials that have a “natural”
shape

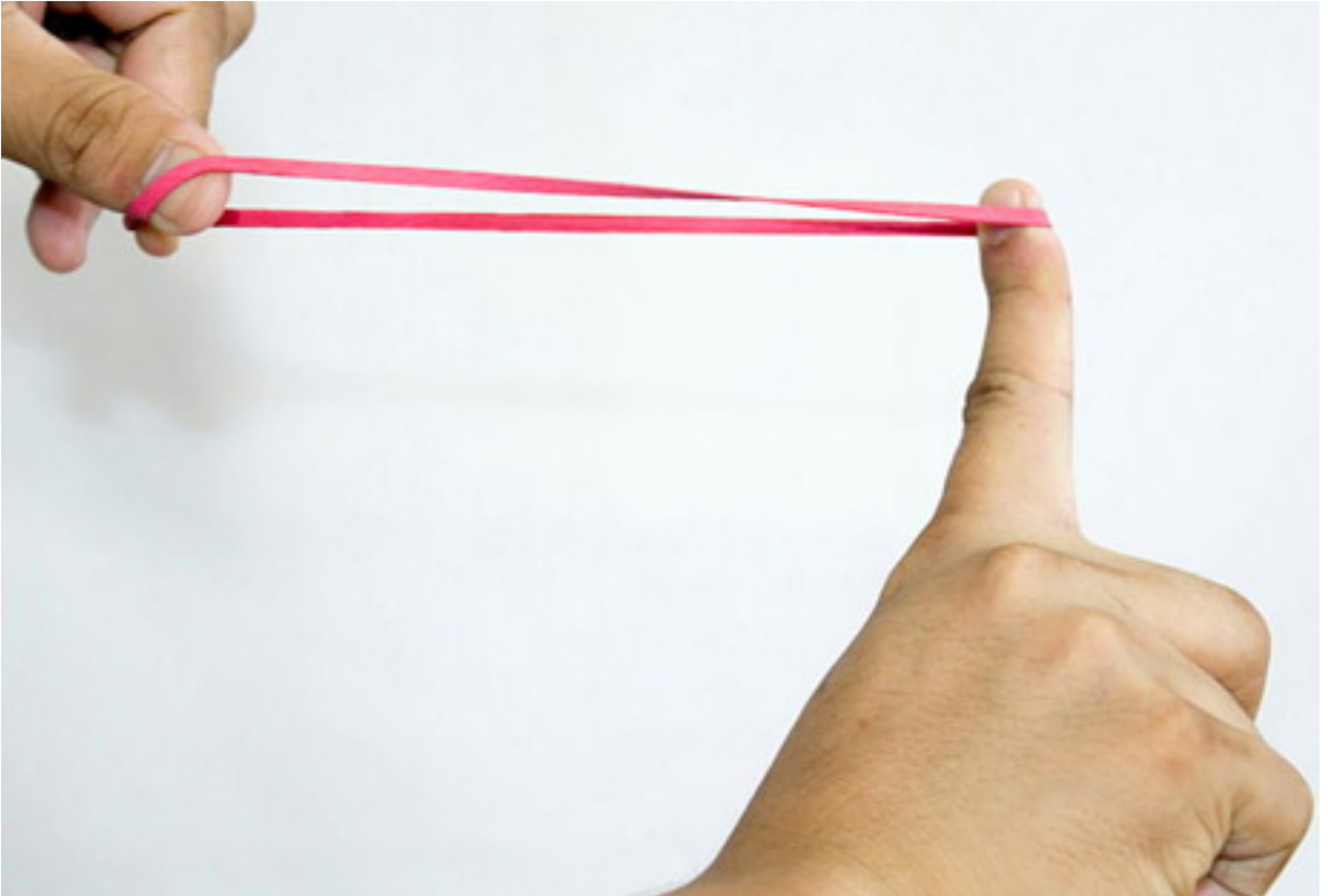
Want to return to that shape, if
deformed

Goes back to its old shape after you deform it²⁹



<https://chembam.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/sponge.jpg>

<https://unlikelyhomemaker.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/sponges.jpg>



Plasticity

Materials that have a “natural”
shape

If you deform them too much,
change shape

Doesn't go back to its old shape after you 32
deform it



Fluids: materials that flow

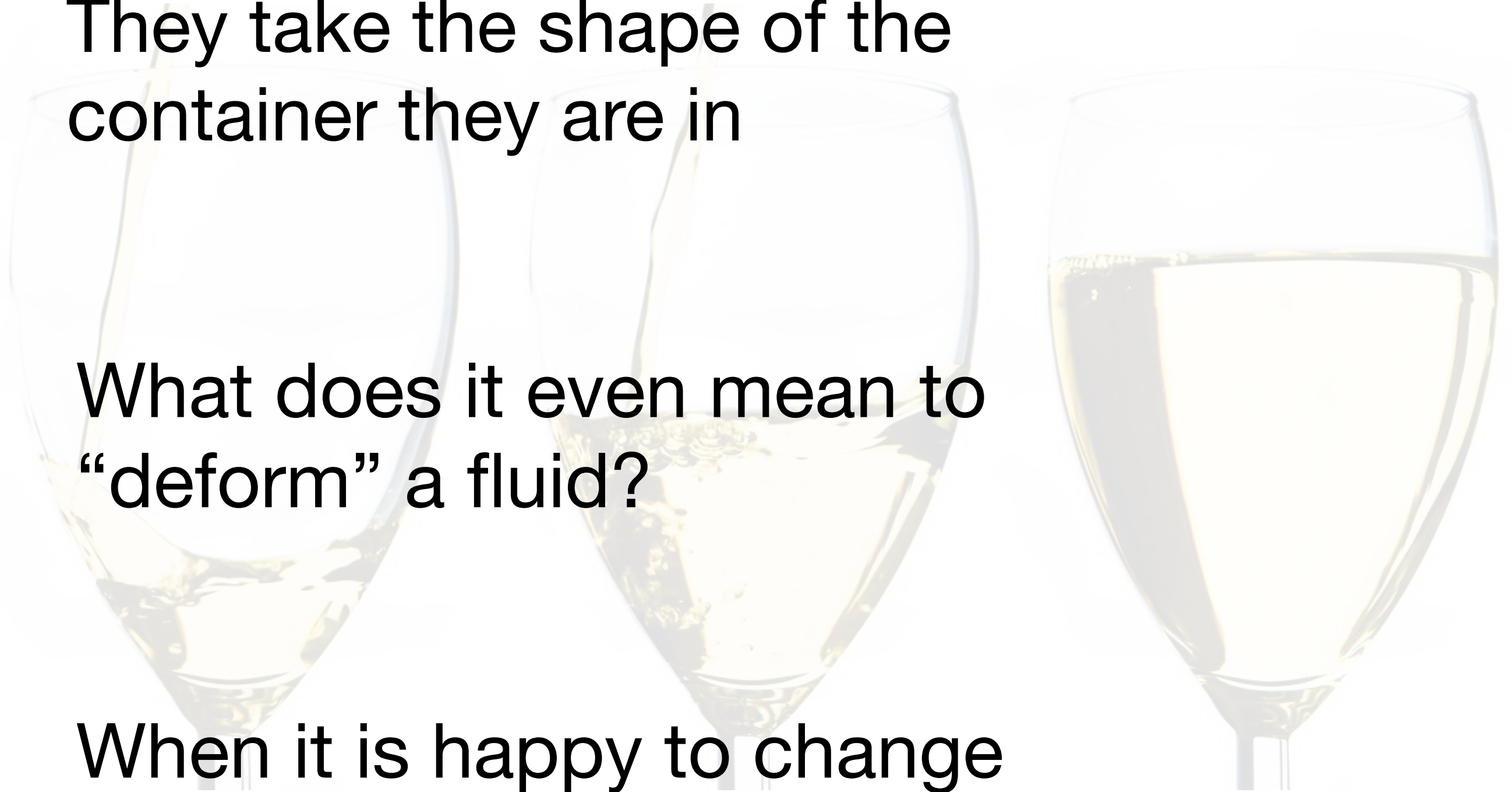
Materials that have no
“natural” shape



Fluids have no “natural” shape.
They take the shape of the
container they are in

What does it even mean to
“deform” a fluid?

When it is happy to change
its shape anyway?



Fluids are happy to adapt to any shape you impose on them, so deforming them is fine

But how fast you impose that change matters!

The faster you do this, the more the resistance

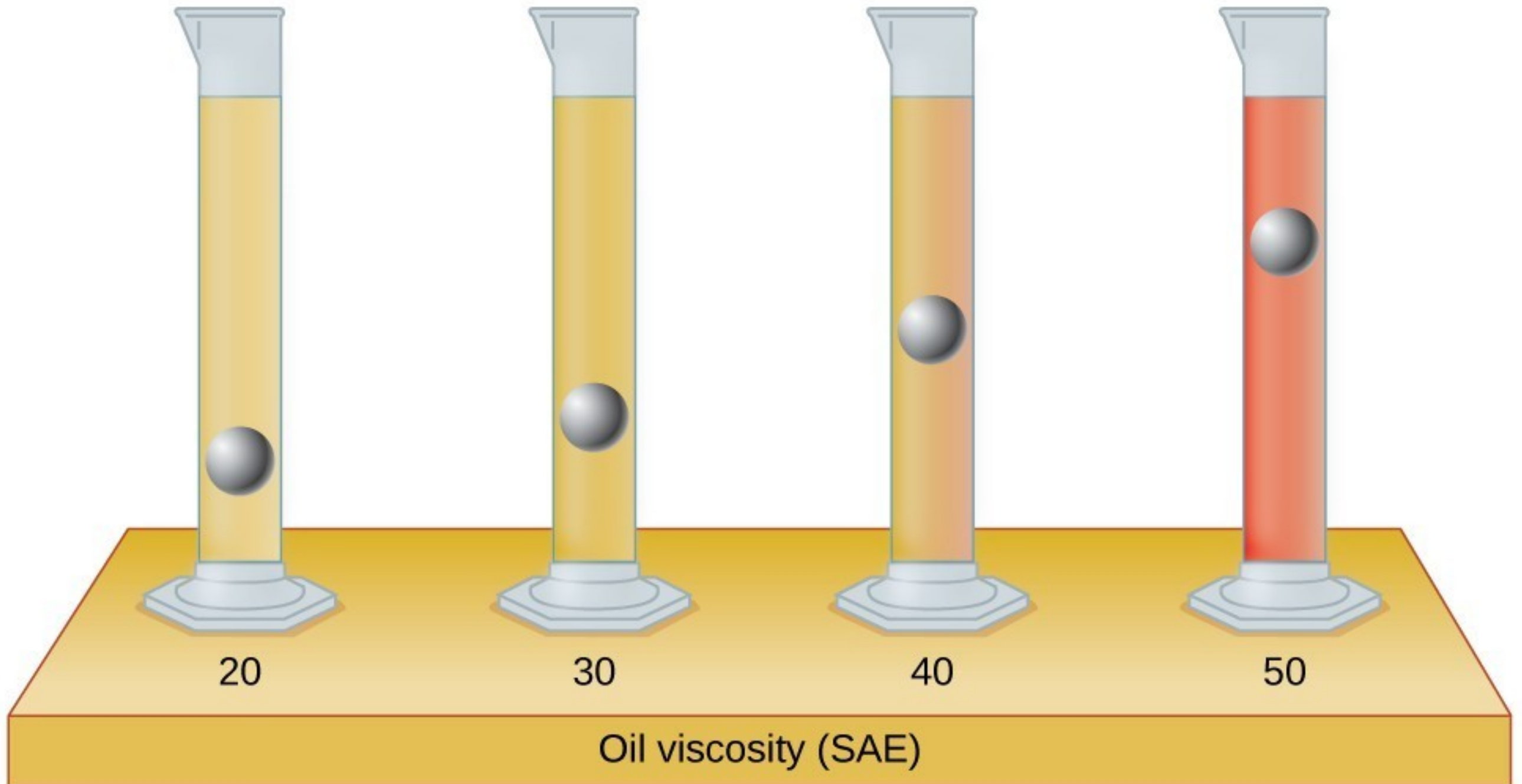
All changes of shape involve molecules moving relative to others

Different parts of the liquid don't like to move at different speeds

Viscosity: Quantifies this

Water and honey, liquids of very different viscosity

The more the viscosity, the slower the ball³⁸
falls

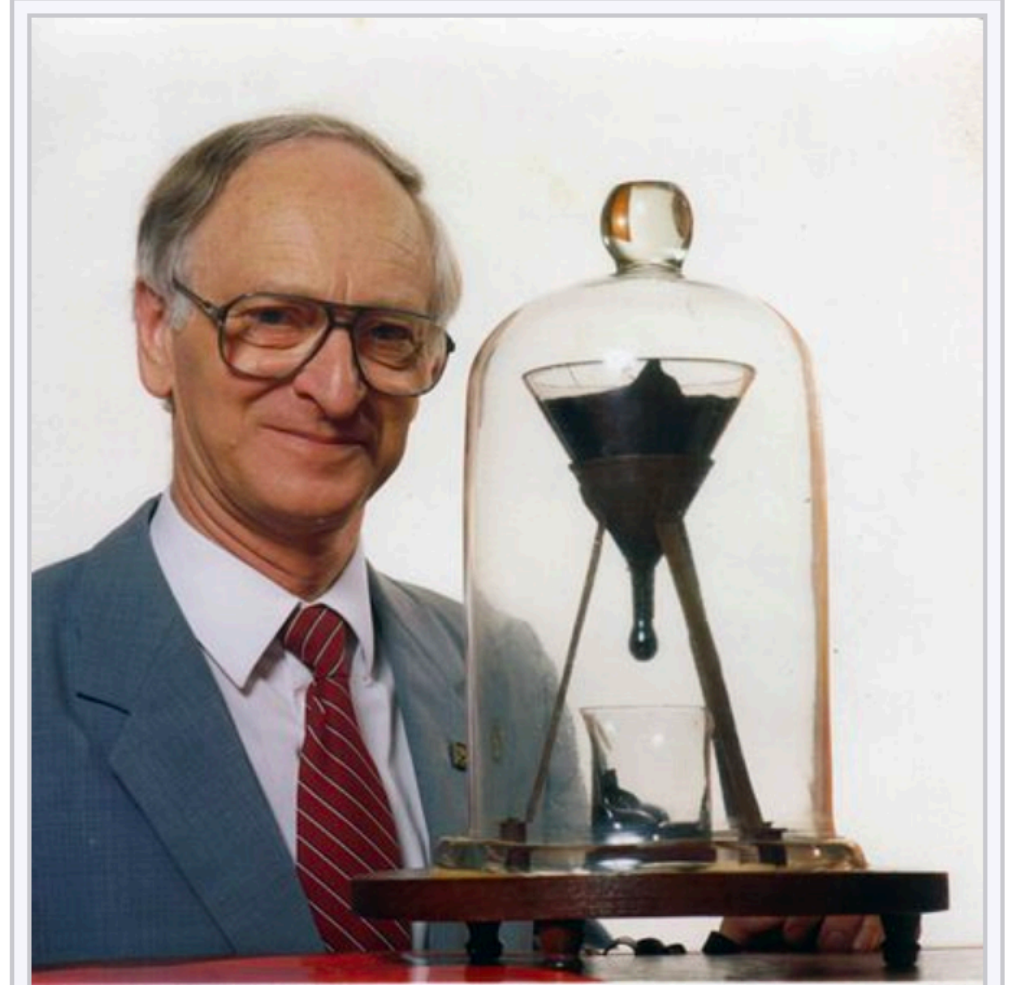



Longest experiment sees pitch drop after 84-year wait



PHYSICS 17 April 2014

By [Lisa Grossman](#) and [Celeste Biever](#)



The [University of Queensland](#) pitch drop experiment, featuring its then-current custodian, Professor John Mainstone (taken in 1990, two years after the seventh drop and 10 years before the eighth drop fell). 

Materials in-between

Materials that can behave like liquids or like solids, depending on how fast you make them change their shape, and by how much

Shapes change because atoms and molecules move out of their earlier positions to adopt newer ones

If you change the shape too fast, the atoms and molecules can't keep up, resist the change (a solid property)

But if you do so slowly, then can flow smoothly (if they are liquids)

But the molecules can also change their shapes and how they are connected to move more freely

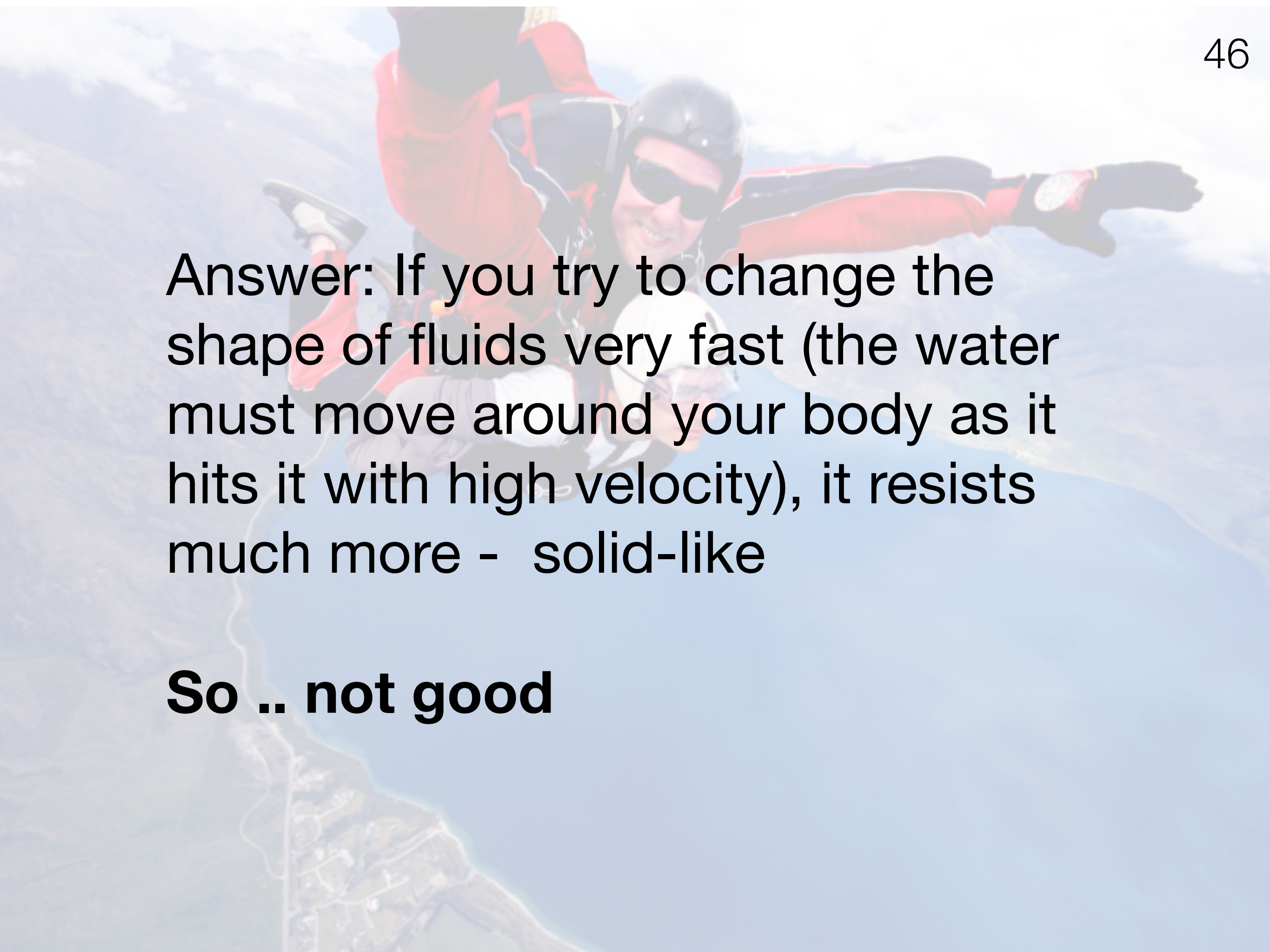




<https://imagesvc.meredithcorp.io/>



Without a parachute to slow you down, what would the experience of jumping into the ocean from an airplane be like?

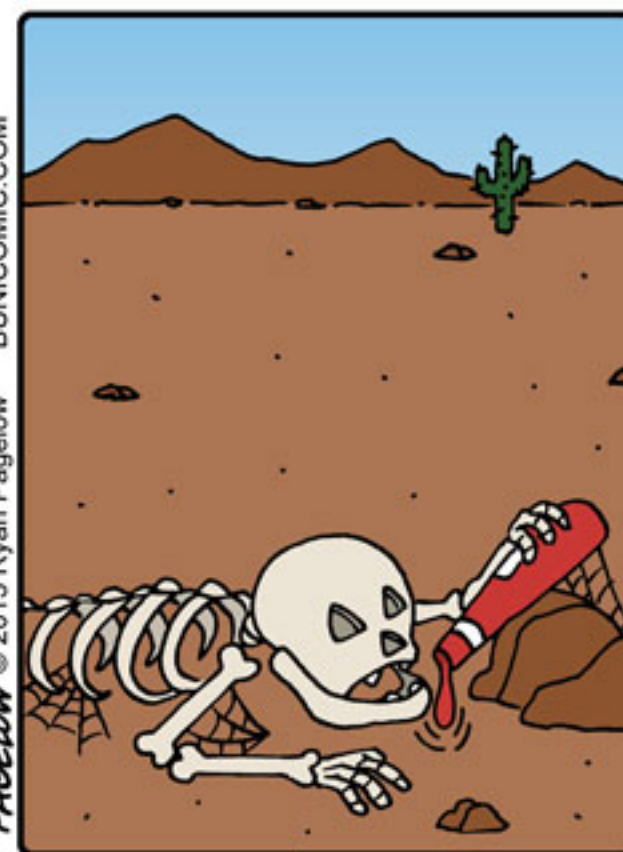
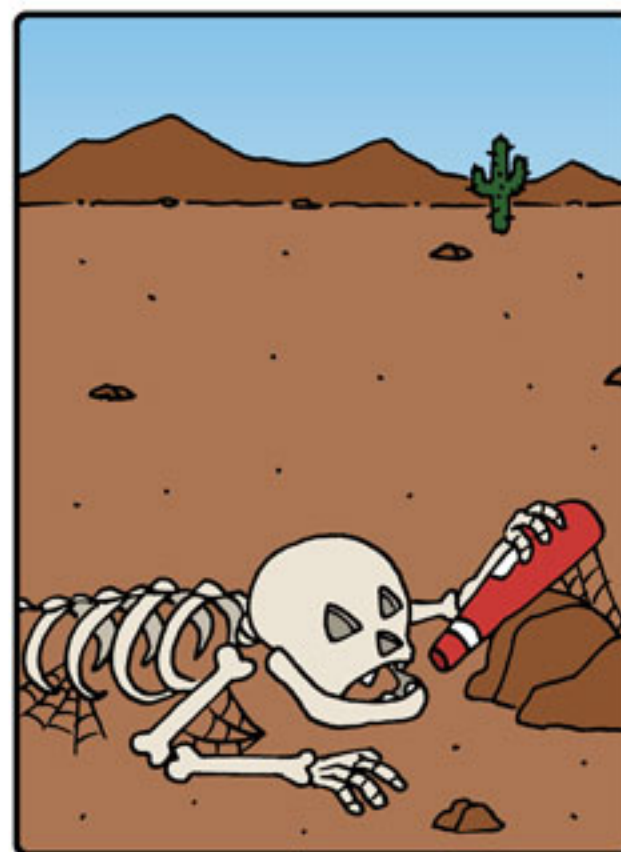


Answer: If you try to change the shape of fluids very fast (the water must move around your body as it hits it with high velocity), it resists much more - solid-like

So .. not good







Sauce holds
together,
doesn't move,
solid-like (gel)

Shake bottle

Sauce
moves,
liquid-like



Thixotropy





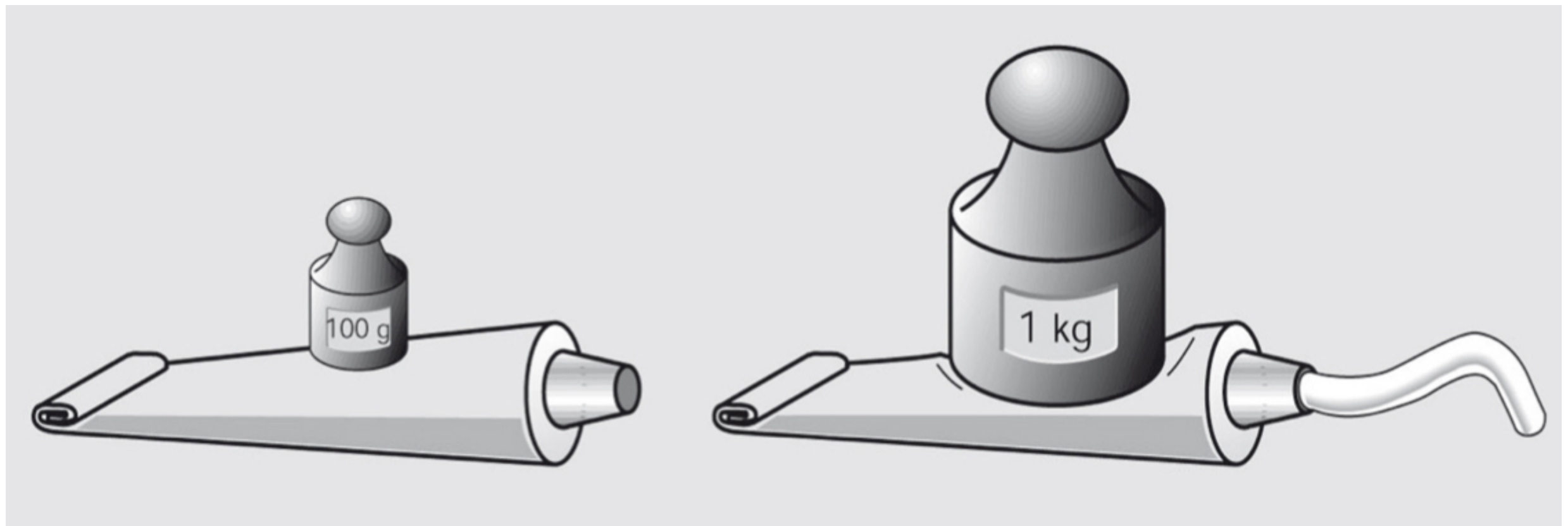
Toothpaste behaves like a solid at rest inside the tube.

Will not flow out when the cap is removed.
Will flow out when you squeeze the tube

On squeezing the tube, acts like a thick liquid

On your toothbrush, don't have to worry about it flowing off the brush

Yield point: Minimum force to be applied to toothpaste tube so it starts to flow



Below the yield point, toothpaste does not flow out of its tube if no force is applied, so behaves solid-like. Above, it flows out.

Bacterial biofilms
(plaque) build up on
teeth every 12 to 24
hours

Toothpaste makes
brushing more effective

Abrasives in them
remove stains without
damaging teeth



Toothpaste foams because it contains a detergent (surfactant), another type of cleaning ingredient

Loosens and breaks down substances on your teeth that would otherwise not be dissolved and rinsed away with water



Other ingredients that retain moisture in the toothpaste and keep ingredients from separating (binding agents)

If toothpaste didn't have these components, it would dry out or require stirring

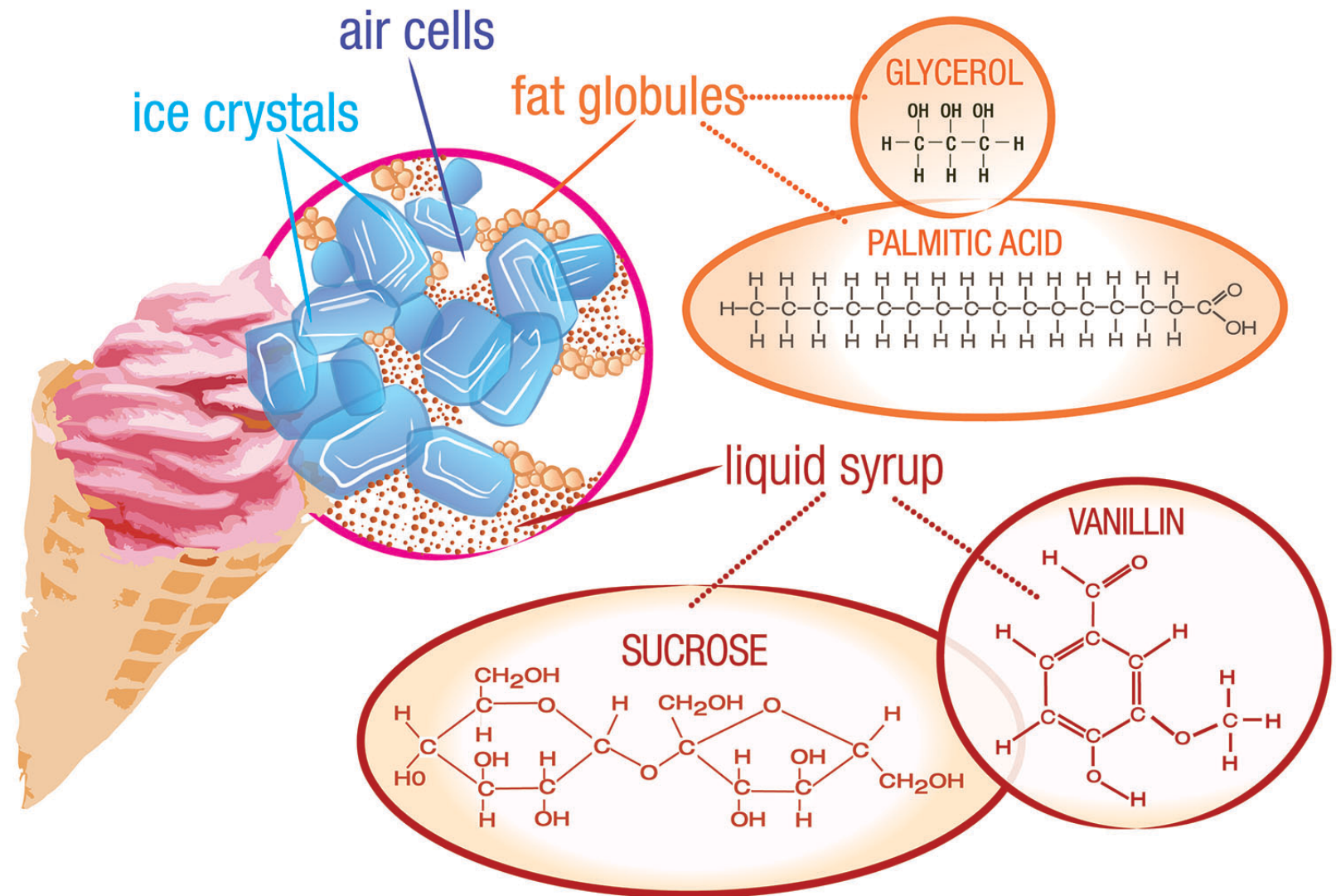
Also flavouring





Ice cream

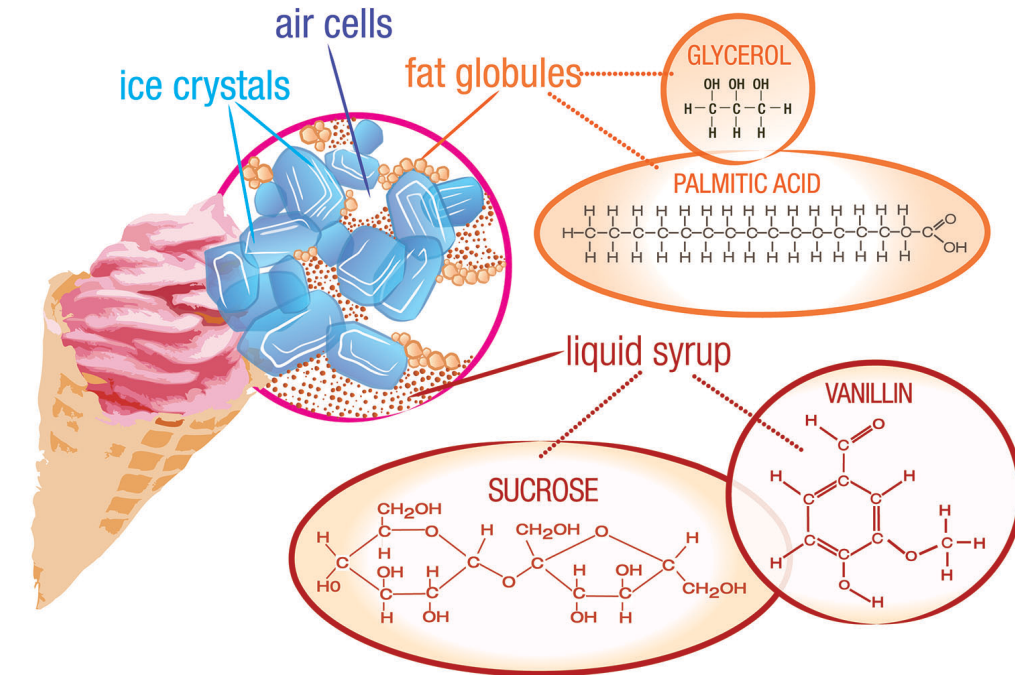
Water,
sweeteners,
flavourings,
emulsifiers,
stabilisers,
milk fat and
milk solids



Ice cream combines two liquids that don't mix

Liquid particles of fat spread through mixture of water, sugar, and ice, with air bubbles

Fat doesn't mix well. Fat content in ice cream has a tendency to separate out



Small air bubbles and ice crystals in water and a network of fat globules

Emulsifiers: Make emulsions stable, prevent fat droplets clumping (**surfactants**)

Act like a sponge, absorb and lock in place, liquid

Stabilizers: Keep the material uniform. Make texture creamy. Prevent large crystal formation

With stabilizers, ice cream contains small ice crystals that melt more slowly



Ice cream makers add a lot of sugar, usually sucrose or glucose

Cold numbs taste buds, makes them less sensitive. More sugar needs to be added to produce the desired effect at the temperatures at which ice cream is served.

Ice cream at room temperature tastes very sweet.



Ice crystals that form when ice cream freezes are important to quality of ice cream

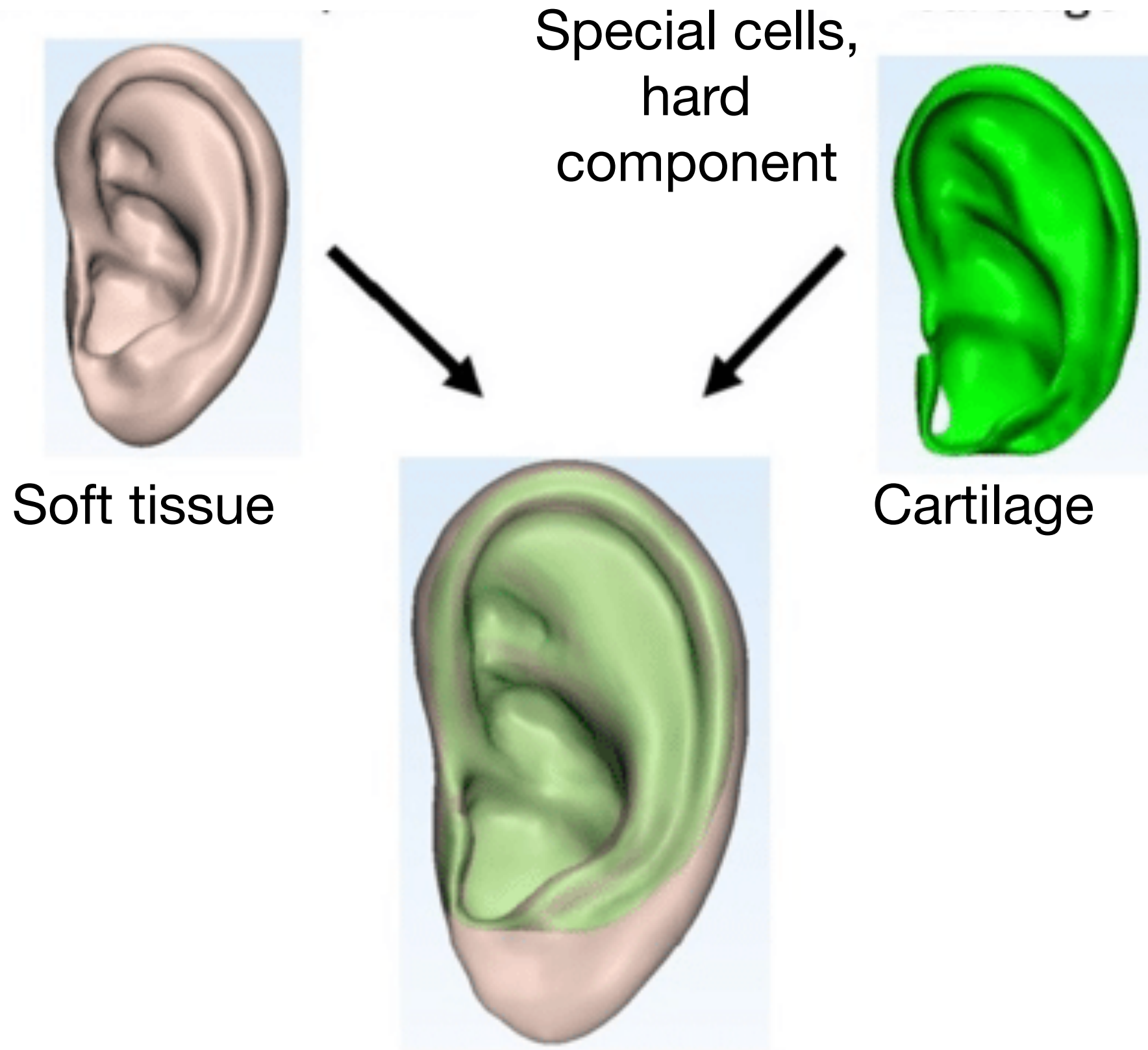
Soft serve ice cream, requires small ice crystals. So ice cream needs to be frozen quickly.


However, ice cream still about 60% water. When served at usual temperatures, not all of it is frozen

Ice cream then “scoopable”









Earlobe has no
cartilage

Has a large blood
supply

Highly elastic

Soft, living, self-
repairing material



A soft but solid
material

Can grow and heal

Flows very slowly if
you apply a force





The new coronavirus is tiny

Little particles produced by people when they breathe, talk and cough invisible to the naked eye, easily able to float in air.

Mostly biological fluids from people's mouths and lungs

Mucus can carry coronavirus particles

Mucus is 95% water, 3% proteins (including mucin and antibodies), 1% salt and other substances.

Mucin droplets absorb water. Swell several hundred times in volume within three seconds of release from mucus glands.

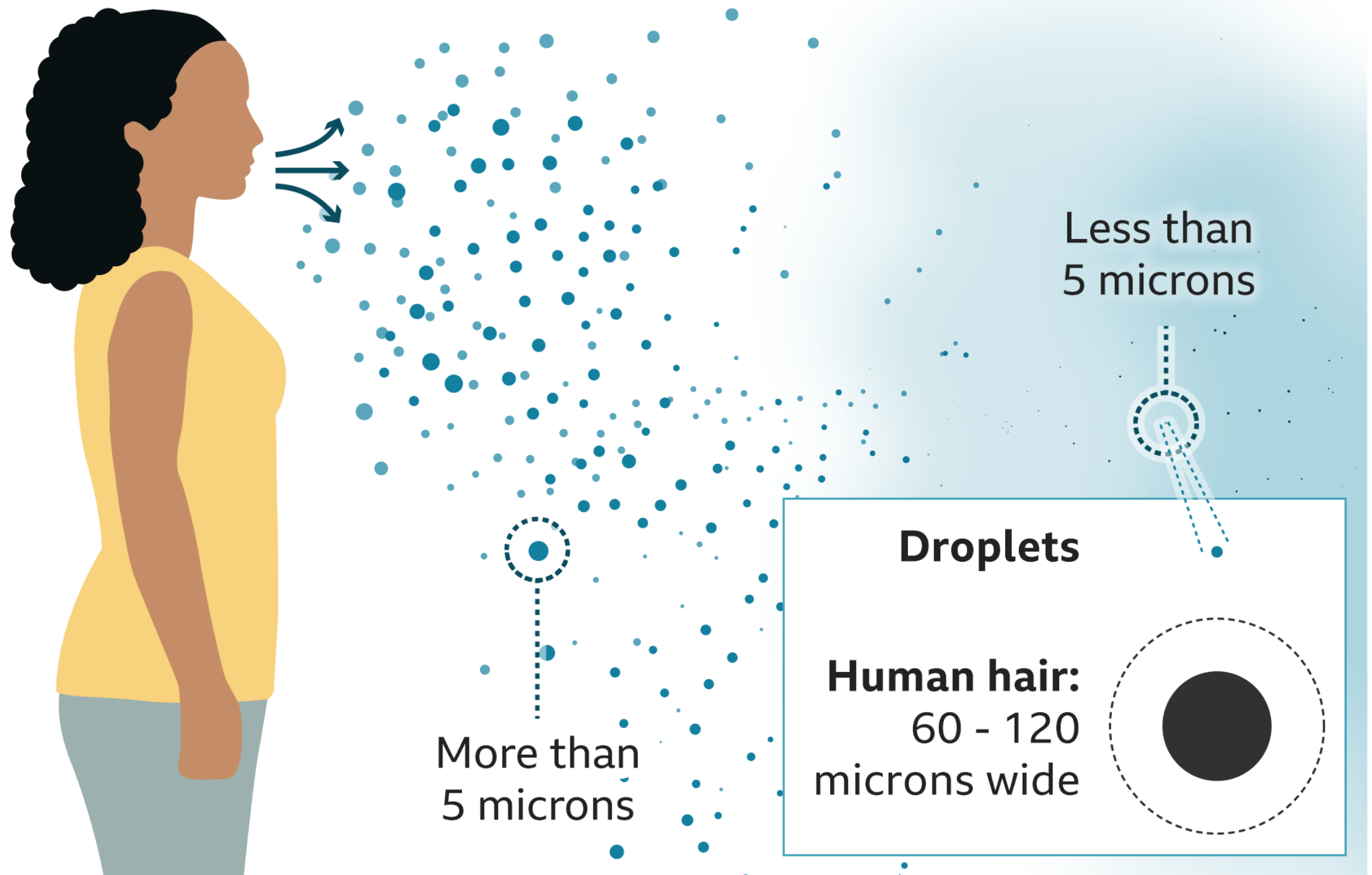
Mucus strands form cross links, a sticky, elastic gel

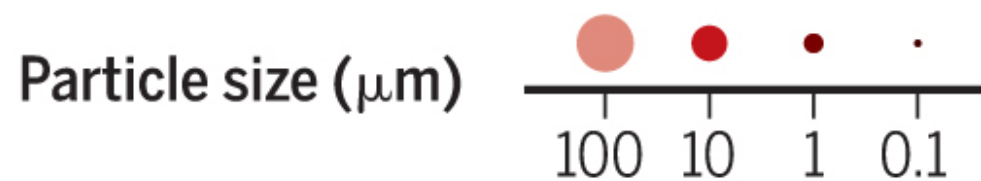
Droplet transmission

Coughs and sneezes can spread droplets of saliva and mucus

Airborne transmission

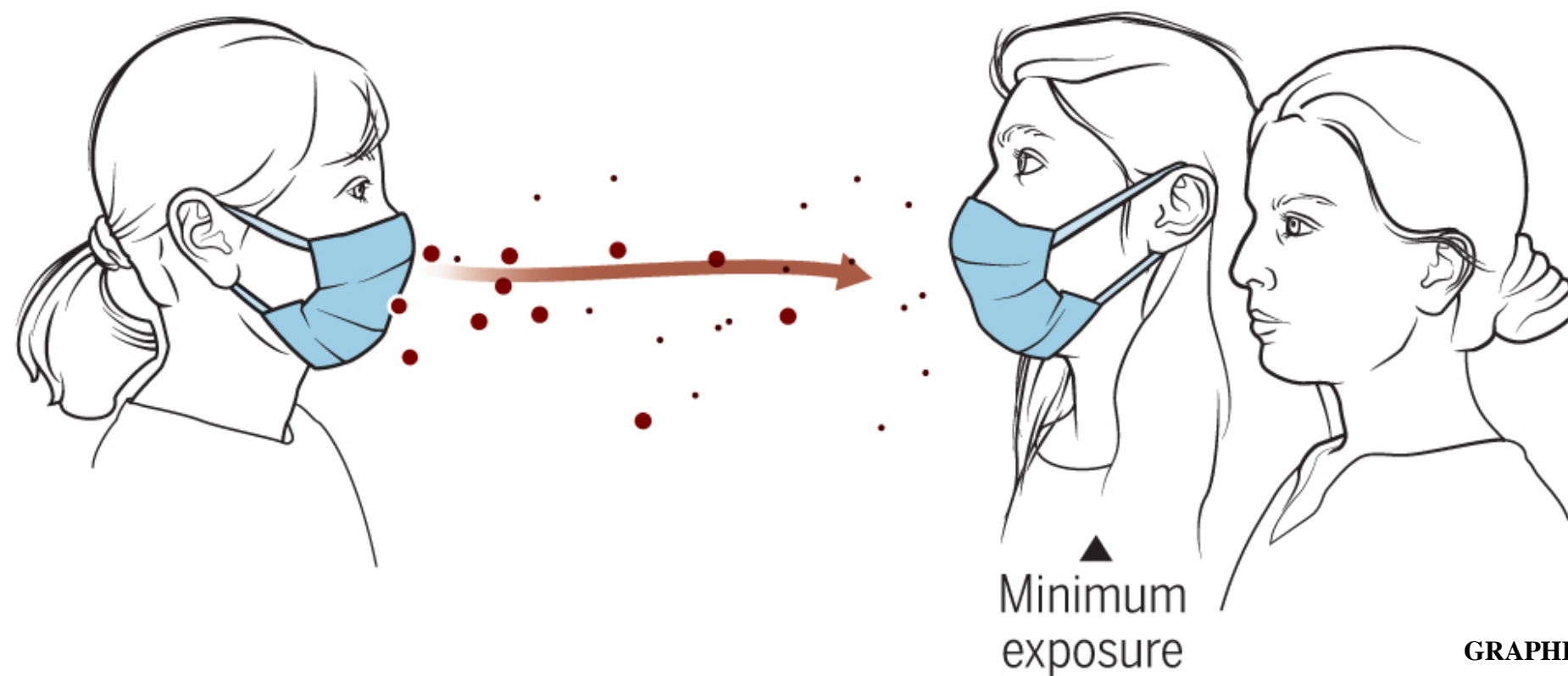
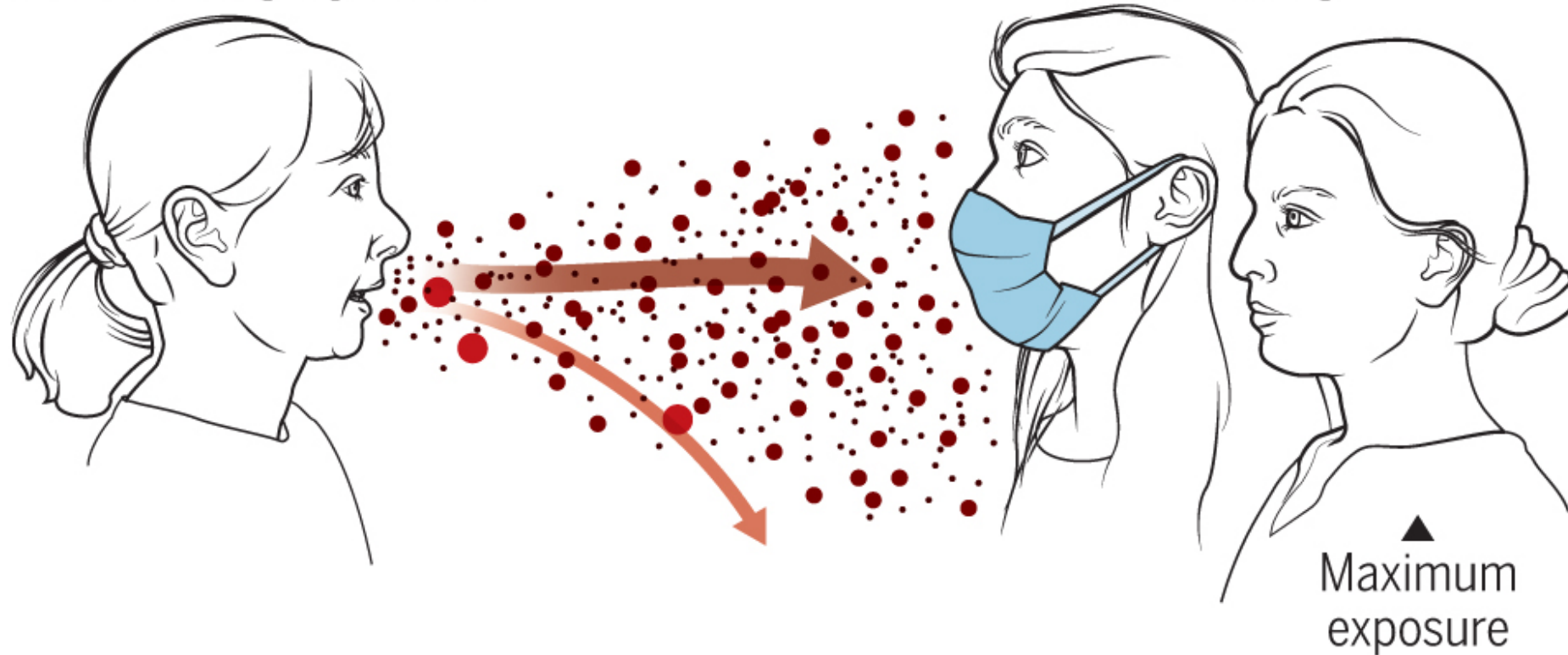
Tiny particles, possibly produced by talking, are suspended in the air for longer and travel further





Infected, asymptomatic

Healthy





Soft and squishy materials are all
around us

Spare a moment to think of how
remarkable they are

Thank you