

To the Albino Child,

WHY AM I PINK?

Have you ever wondered what makes you look different from other children? Why is your skin so pink? Why is your hair so yellow?

YOU ARE NOT SICK. YOU ARE NOT CURSED.

You are not sick. You have a condition called albinism. It is not a disease. It is not caused by germs. You did not get your pink skin by catching it, and no one else can catch it from you.

It is not caused by spirits or gods. It does not come from a curse.

WHAT IS ALBINISM?

Then why is your skin pink?

It is just because your skin does not have a pigment or color called melanin. So your blood shows through and makes your skin look pink. It is a condition called albinism. A condition is not a sickness. It just means, "this is the way this thing is." In the condition called albinism, the skin does not make pigment or coloring, and you look white or pink.

VARIETY IS BEAUTIFUL. GOD LIKES IT.

God loves variety. He made many colors and kinds of people in our world and He loves them all. God made you and He loves you, too. Wouldn't it be a boring, ugly world if all the flowers were the same color? Or all the butterflies looked just the same? Or all the children looked just the same? God loves the beauty of many shades of color. He created all the colors. Children who are very, very dark like charcoal are beautiful to him, and so are those who are light brown like chocolate and so are those who are white and pink, like roses or lilies. (Teacher, use any common flower that is very light in color.) He created all these colors. He created you just the way you are, and He loves you just the way you are.

SOME PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND

If others seem afraid of you sometimes, it is only because they don't understand what albinism is. You do look different from others, but you are just like them in most ways.

YOU CAN DO WORTHWHILE THINGS WITH YOUR LIFE.

Many people with albinism have grown up to do outstanding things. Some well known singers, government people and business people are albinos. With God's help, you can do anything that other people can do.

(Show some pictures of albinos who have achieved important things.)

Many people with albinism are very intelligent or smart. You can learn just like others. You can go to school. You can do well in your studies.

YOU CAN LIVE LONG

People with albinism can live to a normal old age just like other people.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THE TWO PROBLEMS YOU FACE

There are two problems that people with albinism do face, and there are things you can do to help make these problems better.

ONE—YOUR SENSITIVE EYES

One, your eyes are extremely sensitive to light and can get burned easily. You don't have the melanin that protects other people's eyes from the sun. You can protect your eyes by always wearing sunglasses when you are outside in the daytime. You can also wear a hat that has a brim which gives some shade to your eyes. Christians who love Jesus have sent you a gift of sunglasses. We hope they will help your eyes. We are giving you this gift just to show you that God really does care about you. He wants you to have a good life and to be His friend forever.

Your eyesight might be poor in other ways, too. If you have trouble seeing in school, ask your teacher if you might move to a position nearer to the front of the classroom.

TWO—YOUR SENSITIVE SKIN

Two, your skin is also very sensitive and can get burned easily. Because of this, your skin and lips will get sores on them very easily. Many albinos do develop skin cancer because their skin has no protection against the damaging rays of the sun.

You can do a couple of things to help protect your skin from the sun. First, try to avoid being out in the sun from about 10 a.m. to about 3 p.m. At this time of day, through the middle of the day around noon, the sun's rays are

the hottest and most direct and can hurt you the most. During this time you should stay inside or stay in the shade as much as possible.

You can also wear long-sleeved clothing. White or light-colored cotton shirts and pants will protect your skin and reflect the sun. Keep your shirt buttoned up. You can wear a wide-brimmed hat to shade and protect your face and ears. You can also wear sunblock lotion to protect your skin. This is very important for the skin areas that will not be covered. Coconut oil will not block the sun, but it is good for your skin and can help protect you from some of the damage the sun might do. You could rub coconut oil on your skin at night or on rainy days when you are staying inside.

GOD LOVES YOU.

God loves you. You are important to him. He loves you just the way you are. You can be a blessing to your family and to the world.

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?

What questions do you have about what we have said, or about being an albino?

What problems have you faced as an albino?

Prepared by:

Every Child Ministries

A Christian NGO bringing hope to “the forgotten children of Africa”

Because children are any nation’s greatest resource—

A precious treasure from God!

PO Box 28080

Kampala, Uganda

e-mail: ecmuganda@yahoo.com

GENETIC EXPLANATION: To be used only with older or more educated children or for children who are truly seeking a more detailed scientific explanation.

More detailed explanation for older or more advanced children:

Every mother has inside herself an egg, and every father has inside himself a sperm. These are like the seeds of a new human being. When they come together, a new human being is formed.

Although it is very small, every egg and every sperm carries a code of information inside of it. That code of information decides what the baby will be like. The mother has half the genes and the father has half the genes. When they come together, the baby has all the genes it needs to help it grow.

That code of information called genes tells whether the baby will be a boy or a girl, whether it will be large or small, whether it will have curly hair or straight. That code of information tells what the baby's skin will be like, what its eyes will be like. That code of information is called genes or genetics, and it determines everything about the new baby. As the baby begins to grow inside its mother, the genes tell it how to develop.

Some people carry genes that tell the developing baby, "Make very dark skin." The body does this by producing lots of something called melanin. It is what gives skin its color. Even white people have melanin in the skin, but black people have a lot more of it. So some people carry genes that tell the developing baby, "Make lots of melanin."

Some people have genes that tell the developing baby, "Don't make melanin. Don't make dark skin." If just one parent has that gene, the baby will still be dark, because the genes of the other parent will still tell it, "Make melanin."

But once in awhile, two people get married and they both have the gene that says, "Don't make melanin."

Then that baby will grow normally, but he will not have any melanin or coloring in his skin." When he is born, you will be able to see the blood under his skin, so he will look very pink.
