

## **Do you have an albino friend?**

You have already read a lot about your albino friend and what makes him look different from you or from other children. You are old enough to understand the scientific or genetic explanation, and you have asked us to explain that, too.

It happens like this: Every mother has inside herself, that is, inside her ovaries, tiny human eggs. From the age of puberty on, one or sometimes more than one of these eggs is released into her uterus every month. Every father has inside himself, that is, inside his testes, tiny human sperm. They are released from time to time, and whenever a couple have sexual relations. These eggs and sperm are like the seeds of a new human being. Separately, neither one is a human being, but 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, a code made of certain very complex chemicals called genes. When the sperm and egg come together and a new baby is conceived, the baby gets codes of information from both parents. Those codes of information decide what the baby will be like. The mother has half the genes and the father has half the genes. When all the genes come together, the baby has all the information 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. This is the way God planned for new human beings 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." In sunny countries, it is a good thing to have lots of melanin in the skin because the melanin protects the skin from the damaging rays of the sun.

Some people have genes that tell the developing baby, “Don’t make melanin.” If the baby’s skin does not make melanin, it will not have dark skin. If just one parent has that no-melanin 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.” This is hard to understand, because both parents might be dark themselves, but they might still have a one gene that says, “Don’t make melanin.” When those two genes come together, the child will be an albino.

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

This condition of having no coloring or melanin in the skin and hair and eyes is called albinism. It is not a disease, so you can touch the albino child’s skin. You will not turn into an albino! He is just like other children except that he does not have coloring in his skin.

Some families have several albino children, while others have both dark-skinned and albino children.

The important thing to remember is that with coloring or without it, God loves your albino friend. We hope you do, too.

If you have more questions about this subject, you can always write to us at Every Child Ministries.

God bless you, and thank you for being a friend to everyone.

Your friends at “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!

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