

Do you have an albino friend?

Do you have a friend who looks more like a muzungu than he looks like you? Maybe a classmate or a neighbor's child? Maybe a brother or a sister? Maybe a child in your village or community?

WHY DOES THAT CHILD LOOK SO PINK?

Have you ever wondered what makes that child look different from other children? Why are his skin and his eyes so pink? Why is his hair so yellow?

THAT CHILD IS NOT SICK. THAT CHILD IS A BLESSING JUST LIKE YOU ARE.

That child is not sick just because he is pink-looking. He just has a condition called albinism. Albinism is not a disease. It is not caused by germs. He did not get his pink skin and eyes by "catching" something, like people "catch" an illness. No one else can "catch" albinism from someone. You can't turn pink by being near an child who has albinism. You can't turn pink by touching him.

Albinism is not a curse caused by spirits or gods. The albino child is a blessing just like you are a blessing. He was made in God's image just like you are.

WHAT IS ALBINISM?

Then why is your friend's skin pink?

It is just because his skin does not have a pigment or color called melanin. So since there is no color in his skin, his blood shows through his skin a little bit. This makes his skin look pink. It is a condition called albinism. A condition is not a sickness. A condition just means, "this is the way this people is." In the condition called albinism, the skin does not make pigment or coloring, so the person looks 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 your albino friend and He loves that child just like he loves you. Wouldn't it be a boring, ugly world if all the flowers were the same color? Or if all the butterflies looked just the same? Or if all the children looked just the same? God loves the beauty of many shades of color. He created all the colors and they are all good. 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 plumeria. He created all these colors. He created your albino friend just the way he is, and He loves him just the way he is.

SOME PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND

If others seem afraid of your friend sometimes, it is only because they don't understand what albinism is. People are often afraid of whatever they do not understand. Your albino friend does look different from others, but he is just like you in most ways.

YOUR FRIEND CAN DO WORTHWHILE THINGS WITH HIS LIFE JUST AS YOU CAN.

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, your albino friend can do anything that other people can do. Your encouragement and friendship will help, too.

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

YOUR FRIEND CAN LIVE LONG

People with albinism can live to a normal old age just like other people. Remember, albinism is not a sickness.

WHAT YOUR FRIEND CAN DO ABOUT THE TWO PROBLEMS HE FACES

There are two problems that people with albinism do face, and there are things they can do to help make these problems better. You can help your friend by encouraging him to do the things that can help.

ONE—YOUR FRIEND HAS SENSITIVE EYES

One, your albino friend's eyes are extremely sensitive to light and can get burned easily. He doesn't have the melanin that protects other people's eyes from the sun. He can protect his eyes by always wearing sunglasses when he is outside in the daytime. As a friend, you can help by understanding that your friend really needs these glasses. If he does not wear them, his eyes will burn and his eyesight will get worse. As a friend, you will not make fun or ridicule albino children for wearing dark glasses. You will not call them "four eyes" or other names. You will remind them to put their glasses on.

Your friend can also wear a hat that has a brim which gives some shade to his sensitive eyes. Christians who love Jesus have sent a gift of sunglasses to go to every albino child. Your friend can get these glasses by contacting Every Child Ministries. We hope they will help his eyes.

Your friend's eyesight may be poor in other ways, too. If he has trouble seeing in school, encourage your friend to ask the teacher if he might move to a position nearer to the front of the classroom. He might be able to see better when he sits closer to the blackboard.

TWO—YOUR FRIEND'S SENSITIVE SKIN

Two, your friend's skin is also very sensitive and can get burned easily. This is because the coloring in our skin helps protect it from the harmful rays of the sun, but your friend has no coloring or protection in his skin. Because of this, his skin and lips can get sores on them very easily if he does not protect his skin from the sun. Although albinism is not a disease in itself, many albinos do develop sores because their skin has no protection against the damaging rays of the sun.

You can do a couple of things to help your friend protect his skin from the sun. First, your friend should try to avoid being out in the sun from about 10 or 11 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 him the most. During this time you can encourage your friend to stay inside or stay in the shade as much as possible.

Your friend can also wear long-sleeved clothing. White or light-colored cotton shirts and pants will protect his skin and reflect the sun. He needs to keep his shirt buttoned up. He can wear a wide-brimmed hat to shade and protect his face and ears. He can also put sunblock lotion on his skin to protect it. This is very important for the skin areas that will not be covered. You can help by not ridiculing your friend for wearing clothing that covers him more than usual. You can stop other children from ridiculing him, too. You can remind your friend to wear the kind of clothing he needs to protect himself. He probably feels badly that he needs to dress a little differently from the other children. You can encourage him that it is the right thing to do.

GOD LOVES YOUR ALBINO FRIEND.

God loves your albino friend just like He loves you. Your friend is important to Him, and you are important to Him. He loves your friend just the way he is, and He loves you just the way you are. Your friend can be a blessing to his family and to the world. You can be a blessing, too.

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?

What questions do you have about what we have said, or about your albino friends? You can write your questions to us at Every Child Ministries at the email address below. We will do our best to answer you.

What problems are your albino friends facing? We at Every Child Ministries would love to hear about that, too. We want to see if we can be of some help. You or your albino friends are welcome to write to us.

THANK YOU

Thank you for being a friend to the albino children in your family, in your school, in your village. Sometimes people who do not understand albinism are very cruel to these children. These children need friends. They need love and acceptance. You can be a big blessing just by being their friend. So we say THANK YOU to you!

Blessings to you,

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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If you are in class 5 and up, and if you would like more scientific information about your friend’s albinism, write to Every Child Ministries and ask for the scientific explanation. God bless you!