

# SEE BEYOND THIS SKIN

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALBINISM



### STANDING UP AGAINST STIGMATISATION OF PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

academically like other normally pigmented people. There are teachers, lawyers, politicians and musicians who are living with albinism.

**Myth: People with albinism cannot go outside during the day.**

**Fact:** People with albinism can go outside at any time but need to take extra precautions when out in the sun. Protective clothing, sunscreen and a hat are required all year round to minimize the risk of skin damage from the sun.

#### WHAT IS ALBINISM?

Albinism is a rare group of genetic disorders that causes the skin, hair, or eyes to have little or no colour. Albinism is also associated with vision problems. In so many African countries, people with albinism are misunderstood and mistreated because of their skin colour.

#### CAUSES

- A defect in one of several genes that produce or distribute melanin.
- The defect may result in the absence of melanin production, or a reduced amount of melanin production.
- The defective gene passes down from both parents to the child.

#### MYTHS & FACTS

**Myth: It is the result of inbreeding or incest, that is, breeding from closely related people, especially over many generations.**

**Fact:** Albinism is an inherited disorder. It is inherited as a recessive gene from both parents. As with all recessive conditions, the chances of two people carrying the same recessive gene increase if the two have recent common ancestors. Therefore, while albinism is not necessarily a result of incest, marriage between close relatives can increase the chances of a child being born with albinism. Therefore having children with a relative is highly discouraged. The body of a person living with albinism has little or no ability to produce the colour of the skin, hair and eyes. This colour is called "melanin".

**Myth: People with albinism cannot see during the day but see well at night.**

**Fact:** People with albinism have eyesight problems due to lack of 'melanin' pigmentation in the retina. They can see during the day and also at night, but they may either be short or long sighted and may need sight aids.

**Myth: Albinism is contagious.**

**Fact:** Albinism is a genetic condition passed on by both parents. Each parent must be a carrier, and both must pass on an albinism gene for someone to be born with the condition. It cannot be caught and is not contagious.

**Myth: People with albinism tend to have more developmental difficulties.**

**Fact:** True, but only because of the vision problems and social pressures. When you can't read the blackboard or you're ostracized from society and can't go to a normal school, you often fall behind academically. This will affect their grades thereby reducing their chances of being employed and opportunities for societal integration.

**Myth: A person with albinism cannot have regularly pigmented children.**

**Fact:** A person with albinism can give birth to regularly pigmented children if his/her partner is not a carrier of a similar recessive gene for albinism. The children may be carriers of the recessive gene but it will not be expressed in them.

**Myth: People with albinism are not intelligent.**

**Fact:** This is not true. Persons with albinism are intelligent and also perform well

#### FAQ's

**Q:** Is Albinism a disease, a curse and contagious?

**A:** NO its just a condition.

**Q:** Which lotion and soap should I use for my child with Albinism?

**A:** Any lotion with SPF Sun Protector Factor and any soap especially medicated ones.

**Q:** What foods can my baby eat?

**A:** Any food.

**Q:** Where can I get help, support groups or counseling?

**A:** There are organisations which can assist you:

**a. Wailing Women**

0775 509 148 & 0716 765 398  
1365 Kuwadzana Extension

**b. Zimbabwe Albino Association**

0733 414 276 & 0772 355 233  
149 Samora Machel Avenue  
zimalbino.assos@gmail.com

**c. Princess Safety Centre**

0782 491 131 & 0783 844 233  
Kadoma Showgrounds  
princesssafety@gmail.com

**d. Albino Charity Organization of Zimbabwe (ALCOZ)**

20592 Unit B Seke  
0718 008 724 & 0773 468 122

For any enquiries please contact: **0772 565 244-6**



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