

This material will help you understand albinism.

What is albinism?

Albinism is a condition that affects pigmentation. Pigment gives color to hair, skin, and eyes. Children with albinism have less pigment than normal or no pigment at all. Some children with albinism have blue eyes and white hair. Other children only have subtle signs that may not be noticed. The amount of pigment your child has depends on the type of albinism.

What are the types of albinism?

There are two main types of albinism:

1. Oculocutaneous Albinism (OCA)

This type of albinism affects the hair, skin, and eyes.

2. Ocular Albinism

This type of albinism mainly affects the eyes, sparing the hair and skin.

What causes albinism?

Albinism is genetic. It is passed down from parents to their children. Even if a parent has normal pigmentation, he/she can carry a gene for albinism. In most types, both parents must have a gene for their child to be affected.

How does albinism affect my child's eye?

Albinism can affect your child's eyes in many ways. Because your child's eyes have less pigment or no pigment at all, they do not develop normally. Many children with albinism have vision problems. Some problems include:

- Misalignment of the eyes (strabismus)

- Sensitivity to bright light (photophobia)
- Rapid eye movements (nystagmus)
- Refractive errors (nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism)
- Low vision

The degree and type of vision problems can vary. Some people with albinism have normal vision while others are legally blind. In general, children with less pigment have more vision problems.

How is albinism treated?

There is no way to correct your child's abnormal vision development, but treatments can help improve your child's symptoms. Glasses improve vision and reduce sensitivity to light. If your child's vision problems are more severe, low vision aids like magnifying glasses and small telescopes can also help. Your child's eye doctor may also recommend eye surgery if your child has rapid eye movements. In the future, there may be research studies with gene therapy.

How else will albinism affect my child?

In school, your child may find it hard to read from the blackboard. This can make learning more difficult. However, most children with albinism can be successful in "normal" classrooms with only small changes like seating location. Your child may find it easier to sit in the front of the class and away from windows. Talk to your child's school about what kind of resources and services are available. Even if your child is not yet in school and has low vision, there are early intervention programs available through public schools.

It is also important to protect your child's skin and eyes when he/she is playing outside. Apply sunscreen and cover up skin with clothing to reduce the risk of

sunburn. Have your child wear sunglasses to help block direct sunlight from getting in his/her eyes.

For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.



<http://www.aapos.org/terms/conditions/12>



<http://www.albinism.org/faq/children.html#Anchor-What-52467>

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