



health

Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

WHAT IS ALBINISM?

Albinism is a **rare group of genetic disorders** that cause the skin, hair, or eyes to have little or no color.

What causes Albinism?

Albinism is caused by a defect in one of several genes that produce or distribute melanin (natural pigment). The defect may result in the absence of melanin production, or a reduced amount of melanin production. Albinism is inherited and requires the defective gene to be passed down by both parents.

Who is at risk for Albinism?

Albinism is an inherited disorder that is present at birth. Children are at risk of being born with albinism if they have parents with albinism, or parents who carry the gene for albinism.

What are the Symptoms of Albinism?

People with albinism will have the following symptoms:

- an absence of color in the hair, skin, or eyes
- lighter than normal coloring of the hair, skin, or eyes
- patches of skin that have an absence of color

Albinism is associated with vision problems, which may include:

- Crossed eyes
- Sensitivity to light
- Involuntary rapid eye movements
- Impaired vision or blindness
- Astigmatism

How is Albinism Diagnosed?

The most accurate way to diagnose albinism is through genetic testing to detect defective genes related to albinism.

How is Albinism Treated?

There is no cure for albinism. Treatment for albinism is provided to relieve symptoms and to prevent sun damage. Treatment for albinism may include:

- **sunglasses to protect the eyes from UV rays**
- **protective clothing and sunscreen to protect the skin from UV rays**
- **prescription eyeglasses to correct vision problems**
- **surgery on the muscles of the eyes to correct abnormal eye movements**