

# OUR FRIEND HAS PKU

A social story for classmates

**NPKUA**  
national PKU alliance



Sarah H. Gallagher, Ed.M., NCSP

# FOR EDUCATORS:

## What is a social story?

A social story is a short, simple narrative that describes a specific social situation or expected behavior, usually written from a child's perspective to help them understand social cues, expectations, and appropriate responses in different settings.

The goal of this social story is to help your students learn about and create a welcoming classroom space for students with PKU and other dietary differences.

## What is PKU?

Phenylketonuria, or PKU, is a rare genetic condition in which a person's body can't break down an amino acid called phenylalanine. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins, and phenylalanine is found in most foods.

When someone has PKU, phenylalanine builds up in the blood because their body can't process it quickly enough. Over time, too much phenylalanine can cause brain damage, including developmental delays and neurological symptoms.



# OUR FRIEND HAS PKU

A social story for classmates

Sarah H. Gallagher, Ed.M., NCSP

In our class, we have a lot of friends.

We are all the same in many ways, and each of us has something that makes us special.



One of our friends has something called **PKU**.



## What does that mean?

Our bodies need protein to grow strong, but people with PKU can't break down all parts of protein the way others can. Because of this, they need to be extra careful about what they eat.



They eat special foods that do not have a lot of protein.



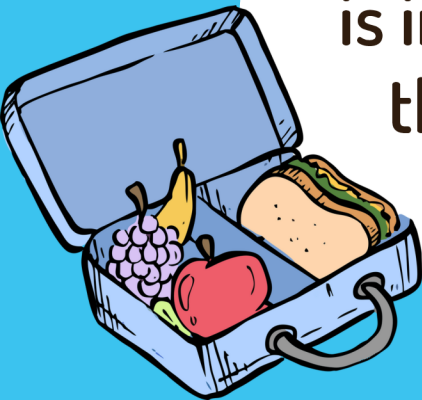
That means they can't eat meat, cheese or some of the other things that I might like to eat.




Our friend needs to be careful about how much protein they eat so that they can keep their body safe and feel their best.





Our friend's food might look a little different, but that is okay. It is important for our friend to eat the food that is healthiest for their body, **just like me.**






Our friend also has a special drink, it helps them grow big and strong.



Friends with PKU might call their drink by different names, like “shake” or “special milk,” but everyone with PKU knows that their drink helps them stay healthy.



**Our friend's drink might look and smell different than what I drink, but I know it's very important for their body.**

I can be kind and helpful to my friend.

If my friend is eating something different, I don't need to worry - it's just part of how they take care of their body. If I have questions, I can ask in a kind and respectful way.



I won't share my food with my friend, because some foods that are safe for me may not be safe for them. But that's okay! We can still share toys, games and laughter.



## We're all friends!

Even though our friend eats different foods and has a special drink, they can play, run and learn just like all of us. We have fun together every day!



Our friend with PKU eats different foods, but they are part of our classroom family. We can always be kind, ask questions and learn about each other.





**Remember**, everyone is different,  
and that's what makes us special!



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sarah H. Gallagher is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist, and a mother to three children, one of whom has PKU. She works as the Director of Community Engagement for National PKU Alliance.

**For more information about PKU, including information and tips for educators, please visit**

**[www.npkua.org](http://www.npkua.org)**

**NPKUA**  
national PKU alliance

**National PKU Alliance (NPKUA)  
works to improve the lives of  
individuals with PKU and  
pursue a cure.**

