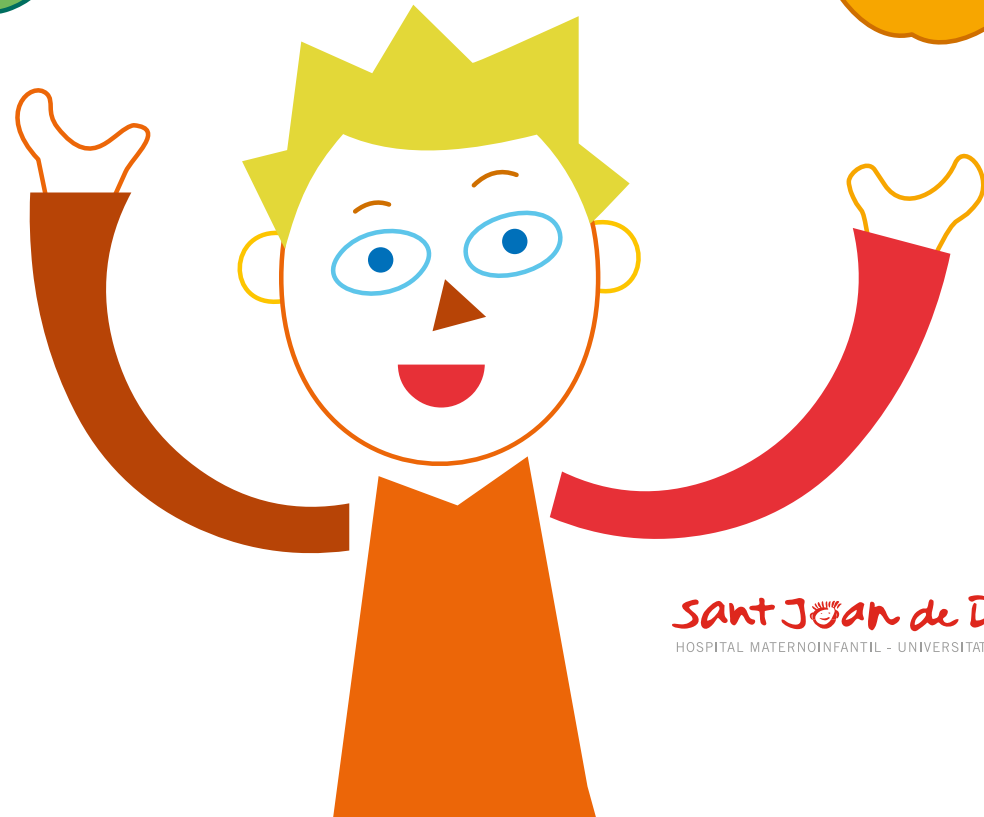


Captain PKU





Captain PKU

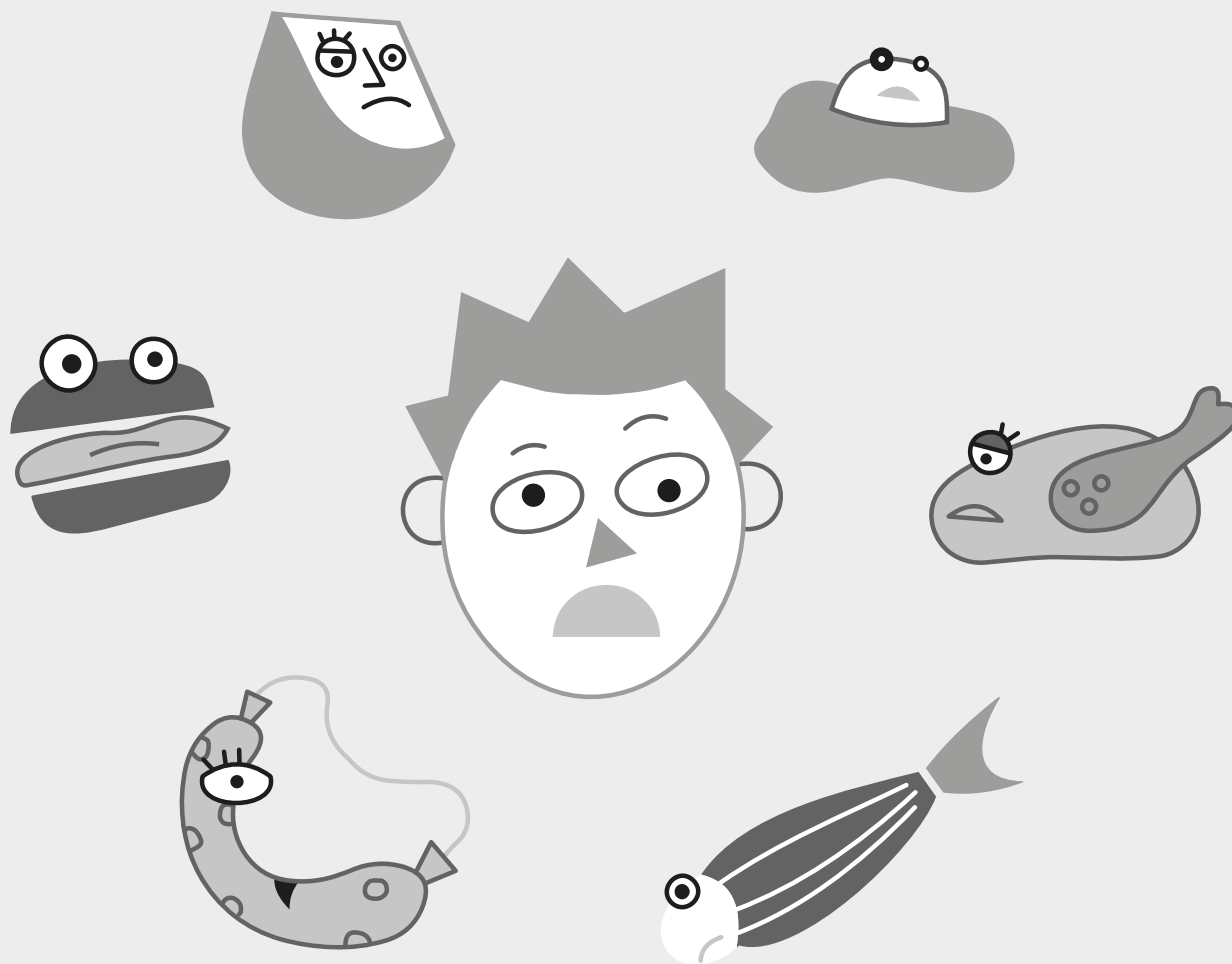
Original idea: Unit for Metabolic Diseases. Hospital Sant Joan de Déu, 2008.

Sponsored by SHS-Nutricia.

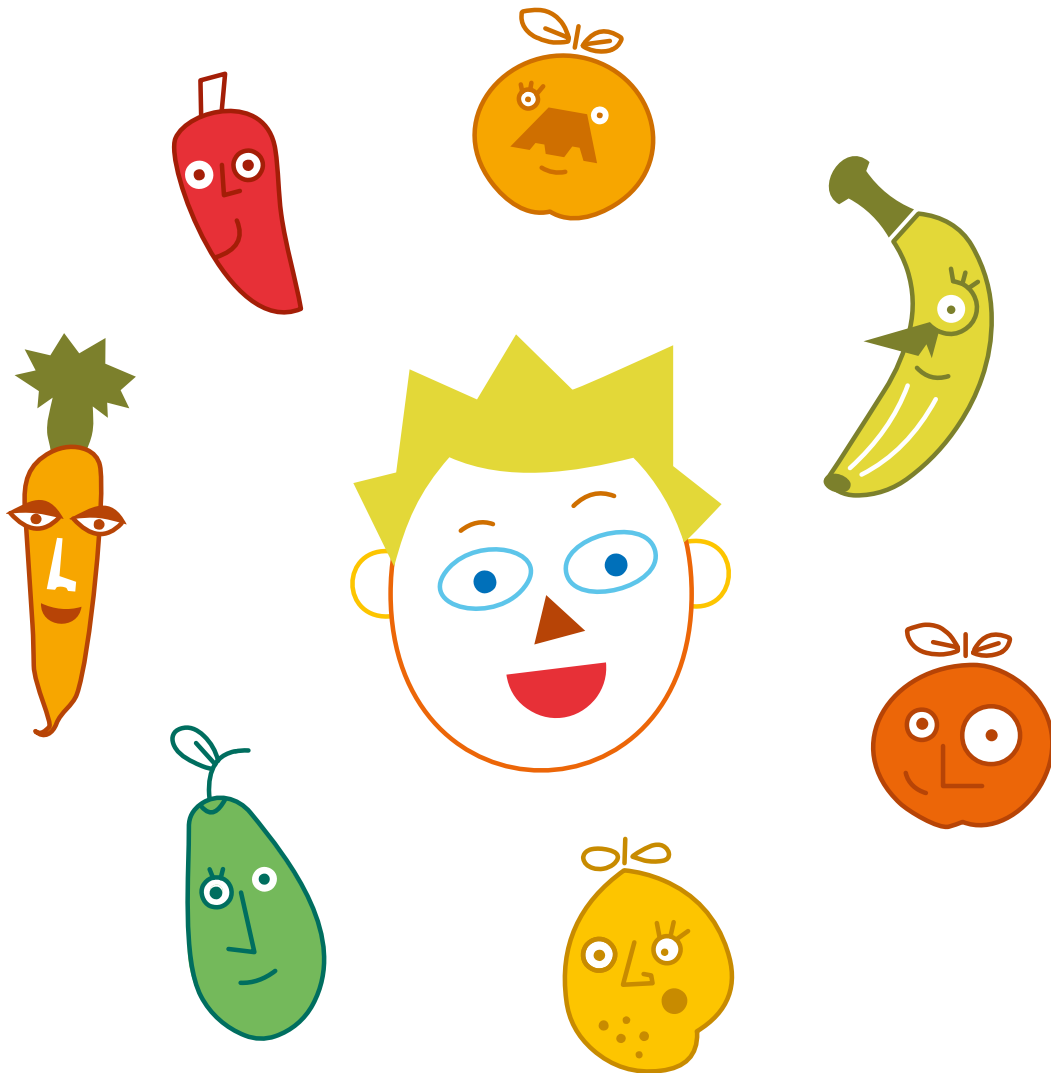
Adaptation and texts: Lola Barceló Morte and Kiki Marriott (English version).

Illustrations: jo-oh. Graphic Design: Cristina Crexells Sender and Trimatge (English version).

Once upon a time, there was a boy who was different. He couldn't eat fried eggs or chicken croquettes or hamburgers or fish.



This boy was called Martin and he only ate coloured foods:
oranges, tomatoes, sweet peppers, carrots, string beans...



At school, Martin's best friend was Ahmed. They always sat together in the dining room.

- Why do you never eat hamburgers? –Ahmed asked one day.
- Because they aren't good for me. They make me sick.
- Well, I can't drink milk because it makes my face swell up and my whole body gets itchy. –Ahmed said.
- And why is that? –Martin asked with great curiosity.
- I am allergic to milk.
- Well, I can't eat hamburgers because I am PKU.
- What does PKU mean? –Ahmed asked.
- I don't know. –Martin shrugged his shoulders.







That day, on the way home on the train, Martin asked his mother:

- What is PKU?
- It's a disease.
- How can I have it if I don't feel sick?



Martin's mother made him look out the window of the train.

- Do you see the train tracks? Your body is full of tracks and on those tracks there are trains loaded with food.
- Where do they take them?
- To some kinds of ovens where the food gets transformed into building blocks of different kinds to make up every part of your body and make you grow.
- And how do the building blocks get moved around?
- In special trains for every kind of building block. When a train arrives at its destination, the blocks are unloaded, and, whoa! Walls, columns, stairs go up...
- I want to be a railway worker! And I want to be a builder too!







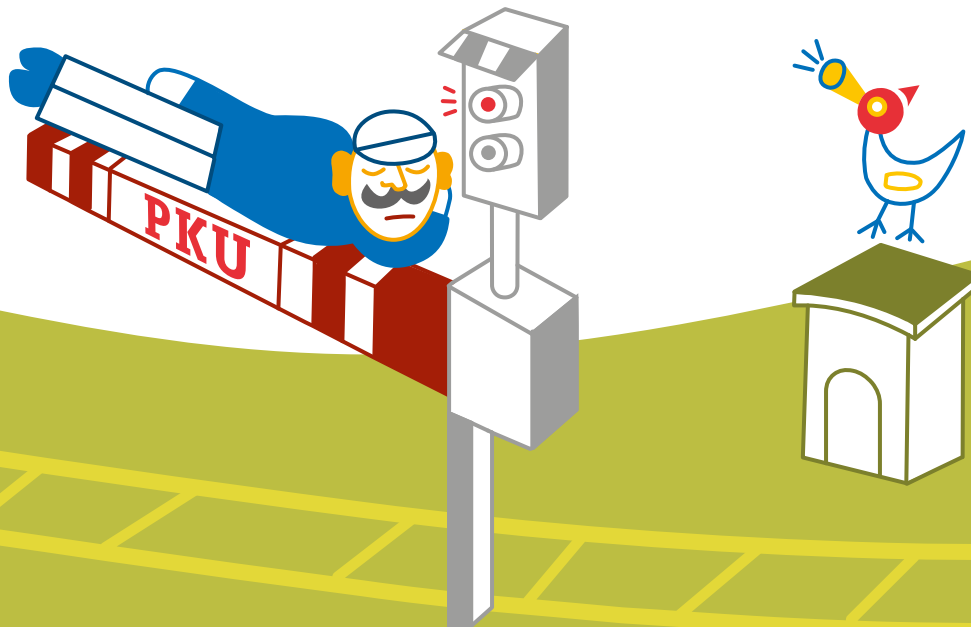
beep beep

PHENYL-ALANINE

PHENYL-ALANINE

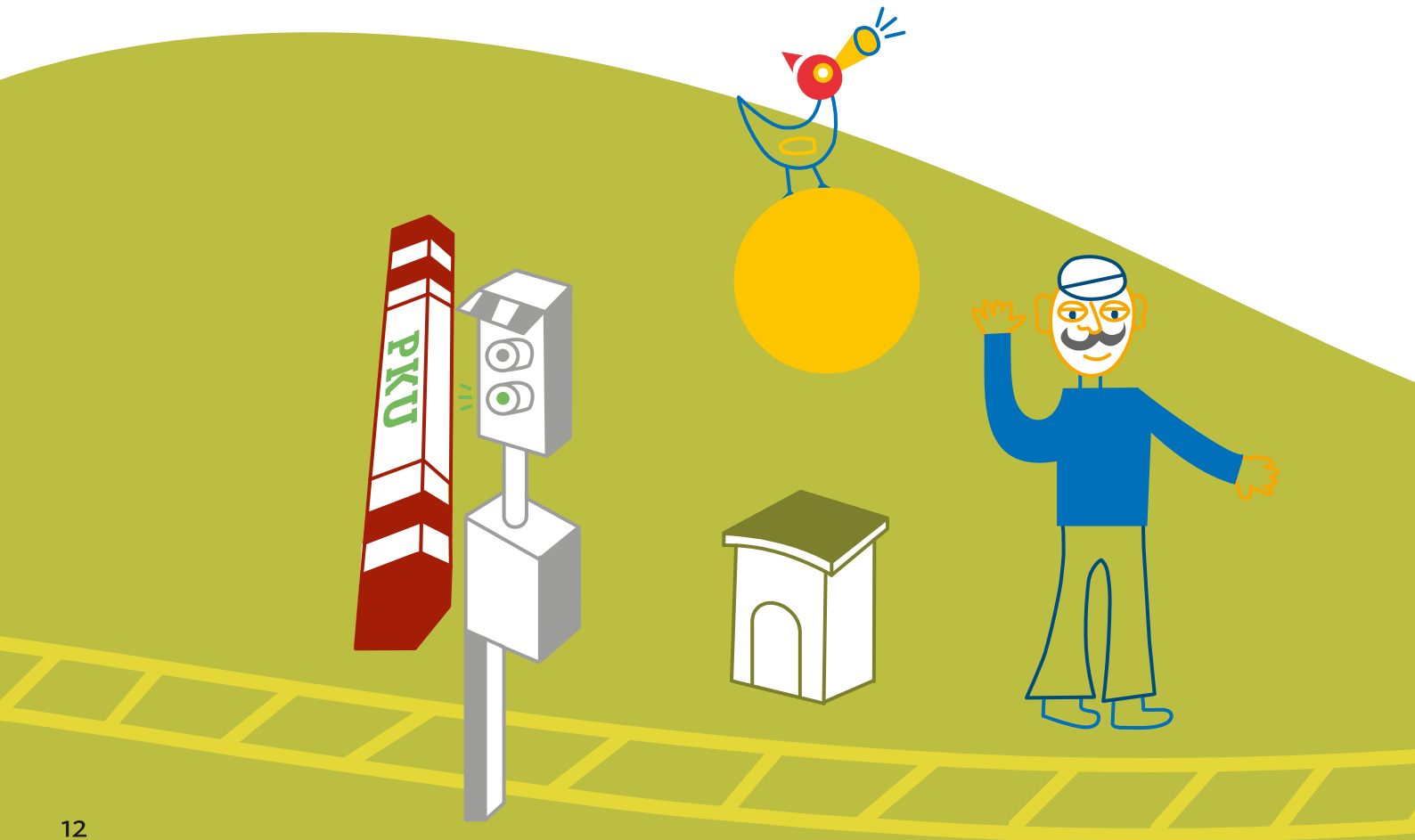
PHENYL-ALANINE

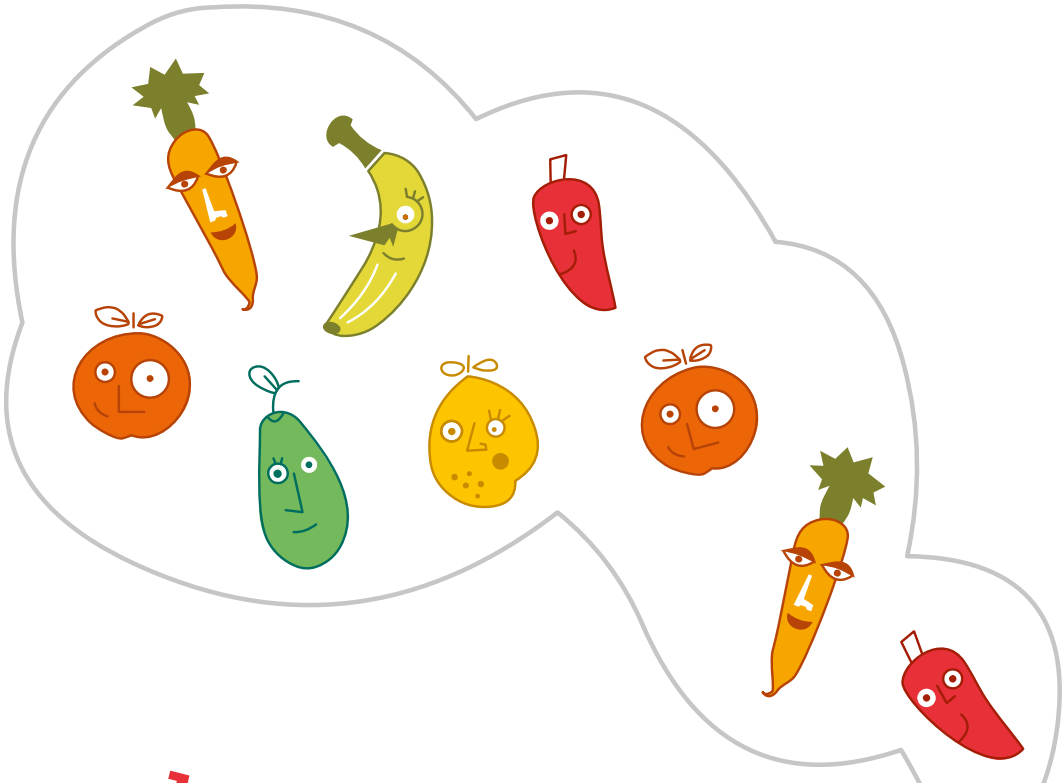
- Yes, they all work pretty well, except for one railway worker who forgets to open the gates at the level crossing and then the trains loaded with some blocks called phenylalanine can't get through.
- Wow! Is the railway worker bad?
- No, he's just forgetful. So it's his fault that one train after another arrives and they are all lined up on the track, and that makes you sick.
- They have to get the trains out of that queue.
- Yes, but sometimes they can't.



Martin fell silent. The train began to move again.

- So then it's better not to have the blocks and the trains of phenylalanine.
- That's what we think and the doctor does too.
- Is that why I don't eat meat or fish or eggs?
- Exactly. If you don't eat them, the phenylalanine won't accumulate and you'll be healthy. All of these foods have a lot and they harm you.





beeeep

PHENYLALANINE

PHENYLALANINE



- And that's the PKU?
- Yes, it's the barrier for the phenylalanine.
- And peaches and beans don't have phenylalanine?
- They have some, but very little. That is why fruit and vegetables don't hurt you. Neither does the special pasta or the bread made of cornflour or tapioca.



Banana

Bean

Carrot

Orange

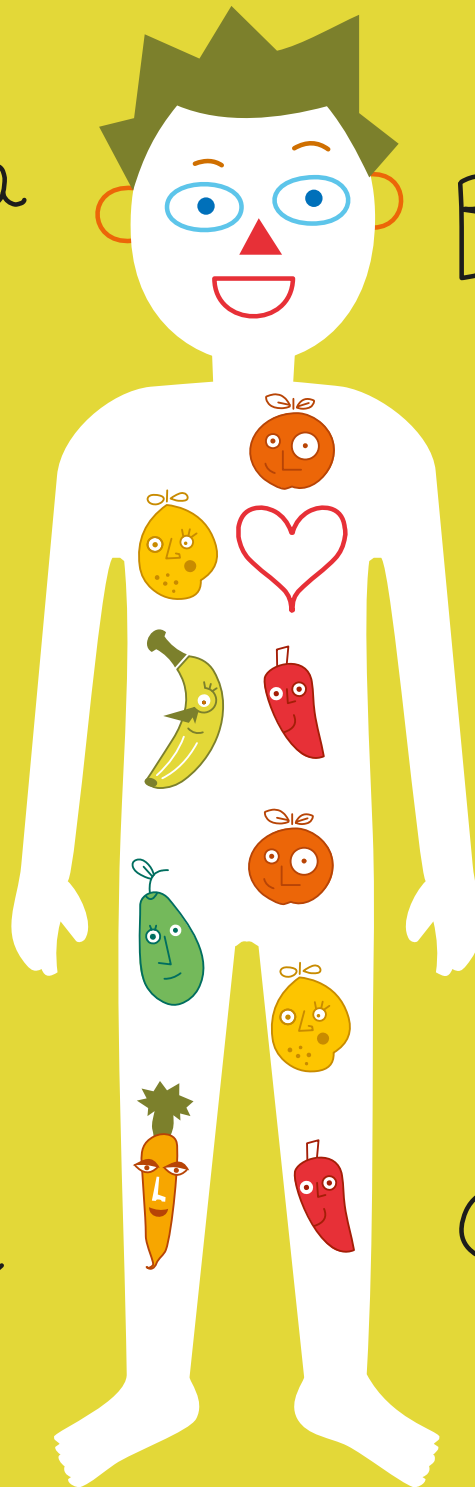
Lettuce

Pear

Apple

Courgette

tomato



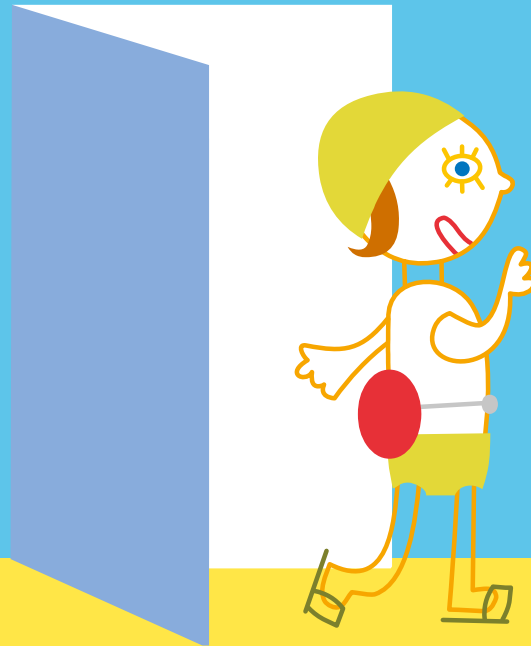




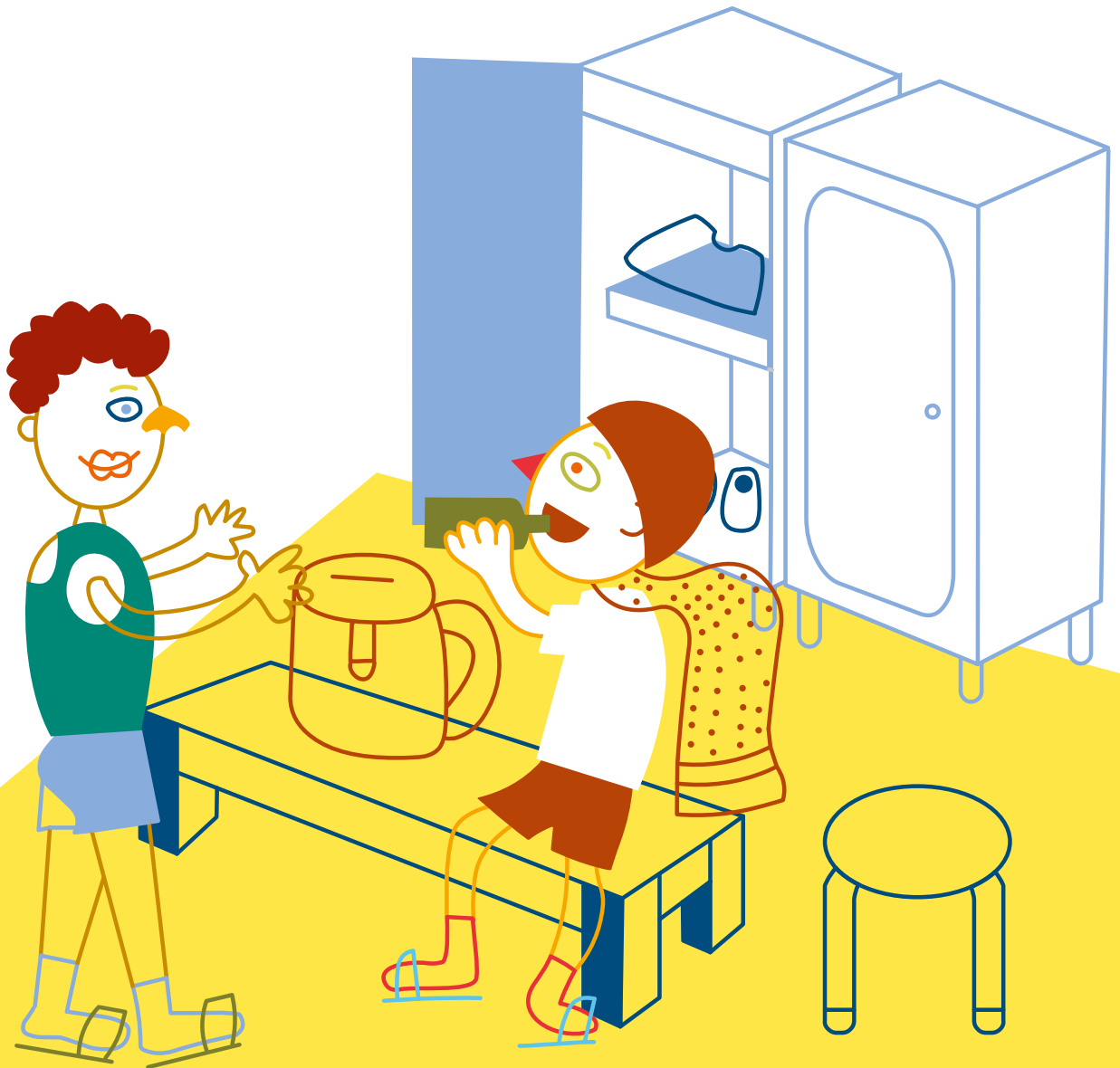
That night, before going to sleep, Martin thought that now that he knew that PKU was just a barrier that needed to be avoided, he didn't feel different at all. His mum was blonde and his dad had freckles. His little sister Wang had been born in China and his best friend had brown skin. That night, Martin dreamed that he was the mighty Captain PKU.

The next day in swimming class, Martin and Ahmed learned to swim backstroke. When they were dressed and were setting off to school, Martin opened a flask and drank.

- What's that? –Ahmed asked.
- It's Captain PKU juice, so I can be strong.
- Can I have some?
- You don't need it. You eat meat.
- Come on, give me a little... –Ahmed insisted.
- No Ahmed, only I can have this. Even if you are my best friend, I can't give it to you.

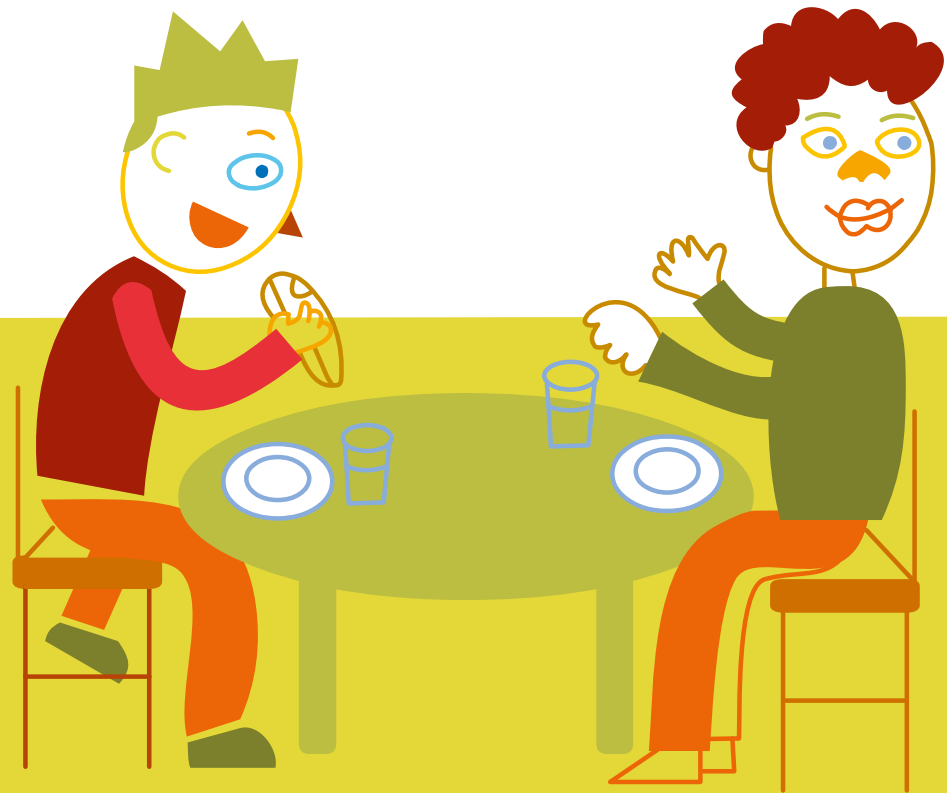


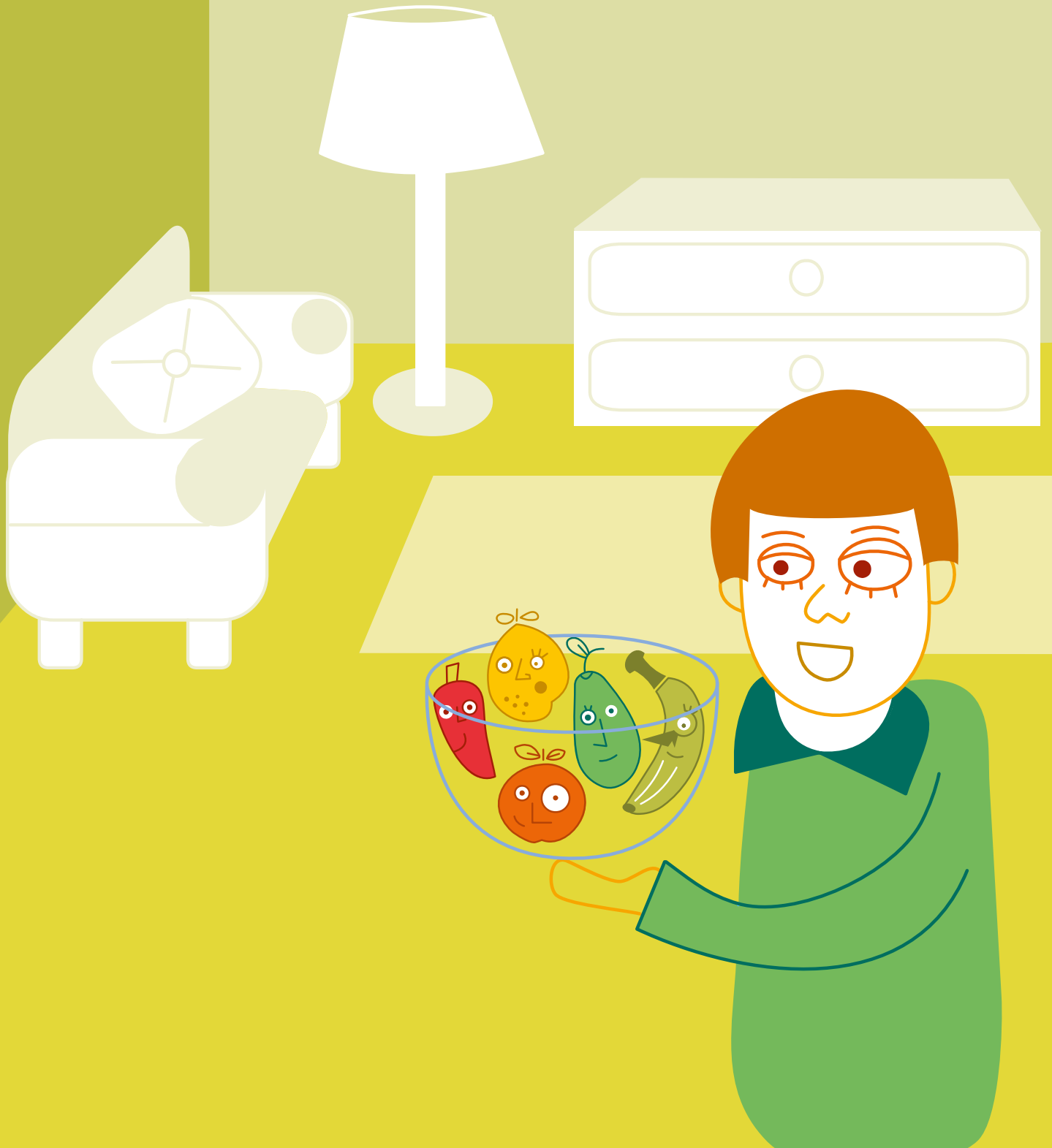
- So then when you have PKU you have to eat different foods to be able to do the same things? –Ahmed asked.
- Well, it's the same except for the meat that has some blocks called phenylalanine that make me sick.



That evening, when they left school, Martin went to play at Ahmed's house. When they arrived, it was Ahmed's father who was in the kitchen fixing their snack.

- Wash your hands. What do you want for a snack? –Ahmed's father asked.
- I want an omelette sandwich, –Ahmed said.
- I brought an olive paste sandwich, –said Martin.
- I made you a fruit salad. Do you want it?
- Yes! –The boys exclaimed at the same time.





That night before going to sleep, Ahmed thought that everyone had to be different so that friends could make each other out in a big crowd.

On the other hand, Martin was looking forward to his 7th birthday. His mother had promised him two birthday cakes, one for him and one for his friends from school. Two different cakes for one birthday party.





THE END

Captain PKU is a story to explain the disorder of Phenylketonuria to the children who suffer from it. It also helps their parents and friends to know that these children can live a normal life.

