

PINOCCHIO AND THE SORE THROAT



**A tale to fight
rheumatic fever**

Pinocchio is a wooden puppet with a very long nose. He looks like a child because a spell was put on him, and he can speak, walk, play and have fun, but he can also suffer and fall ill.

His father, Geppetto, is a carpenter and he carved the puppet out of black ebony wood. They live together in a hut in a village on the edge of a forest, but Pinocchio often goes to the Macauro family's house to play with their children and sometimes he stays overnight with his great friend Manuel.

The Mucauros are a large family with five young children who go to school in the Community of Father Grau.

They all sleep in the same bedroom in a small space because their house is not very big. They usually play

outdoors and one day Manuel got a very high temperature and fell ill.

Together with the fever, which lasted a few days, he also got a sore throat and it hurt him when he swallowed. He had had sore throats many other times and his mother hadn't taken too much notice.

This time it was different. The fever and sore throat had been caused by a bacterium called Coccus, or rather «Streptococcus», which is its full name, and this could make Manuel much more seriously ill later on, even years after his sore throat. It could involve his heart and his knee and ankle joints, making them swell up and ache. This could turn into an illness which is widespread in Africa and around the world and is called rheumatic fever.

Pinocchio's fairy helped little Manuel. Pinocchio was in the bed next to Manuel and saw that he was suffering. He was bathed in sweat because of his high temperature and sore throat.

Pinocchio loved Manuel very much and so he felt Manuel's pain as if it was his own. As soon as Pinocchio fell asleep, the fairy made him have the following dream: Pinocchio and Manuel were grown-up boys, but they weren't happy. Manuel was in hospital suffering from heart trouble.

He got tired if he did too much and he found it difficult to breathe. His heart wasn't able to pump his blood properly — he was very ill! He was always having to rest and take a lot of medicines. And it was that coccus — or rather that «streptococcus» — which had caused him

that silly sore throat years before when he went to school. The doctors were good, but therapy was limited, so they even talked about flying him to an European or American hospital to give him an operation on his heart valves which had been affected by the illness.

Pinocchio woke up very frightened, but luckily it was just a dream. He and Manuel were still children and Manuel was still sleeping beside him, but it was clear that he was suffering and feverish. Pinocchio fell asleep again and the fairy made him have another dream.

This time he was in Italy, attending the Montessori School. A child called Matteo had got a high temperature and a sore throat.

His mum immediately took him to the doctor, who looked for «coccus», or rather «streptococcus», in his

mouth. He put a little stick called a tampon in Matteo's mouth. After three minutes some bad coccus appeared on the culture medium and the diagnosis was made: his sore throat could be the first sign of rheumatic fever. Then the doctor took a syringe with a painless needle and a liquid called Penicillin in a small bottle.

Penicillin is an antibiotic and is coccus's sworn enemy, but man's best friend. Pik! ...one little prick and the battle is won! Matteo will never suffer from heart trouble, he will never get rheumatic fever because the coccus found in his throat was destroyed immediately by the Penicillin.

Suddenly Pinocchio woke up again.

Manuel was awake, too, with bright eyes, a high temperature and the coccus stinging his throat.

Pinocchio cheered him up: «in a dream the fairy told me what you must do. Let's go to the clinic at the hospital. You need some tests and, if they find any streptococcus, you must have a Penicillin injection so your heart won't get ill».

«What... how...», Matteo replied, «but I've only got a sore throat and a high temperature. What has my heart go to do with it? What are you talking about?».

«Don't worry. Trust me and follow me. The fairy told me that the "Heart Friends Around the World" have organized a clinic for the prevention of rheumatic fever at our town hospital.

You know, in the world there are a lot of children who get rheumatic fever every year and their hearts are hardly able to pump their blood.

The Friends of the Heart think they can be saved, so you must do what I tell you».

Pinocchio and Manuel ran to the clinic and told their story to the hospital doctor. The tampon was positive to the streptococcus test: the Penicillin injection was ready! And then... it was over! After one day Manuel's temperature was gone and his throat didn't burn any more. The coccus have been destroyed and, most important of all, they won't be able to make Manuel's heart ill. Our heart, which we must keep strong and healthy to be able to run, sing, play, work and love.

Pinocchio and Manuel went back home. They had learnt a new story, a story to tell all their friends and their friends' mums.



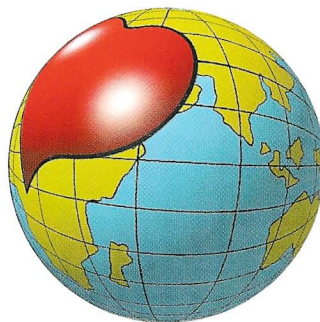












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