



MY MOM'S Kidney
is Named Lucy

September.

My mom wears a beeper. There's a suitcase packed and ready to go sitting by the front door.

My dad wears a frown. He looks at Mom when she isn't looking and he's got worry lines in his face.

My little sister, Hannah, used to be pretty tough and bossy but now

she cries everytime we fight.

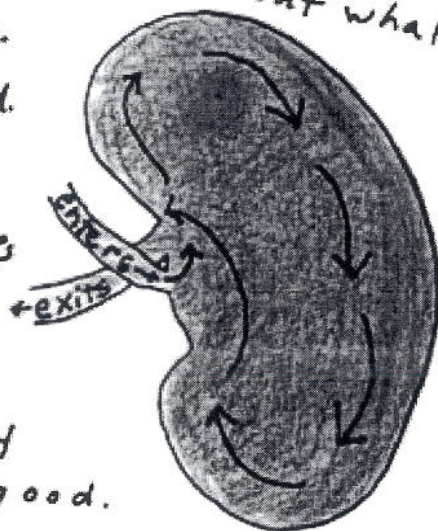


We're waiting. It's not like waiting for birthday gifts from grand parents or waiting for Christmas.

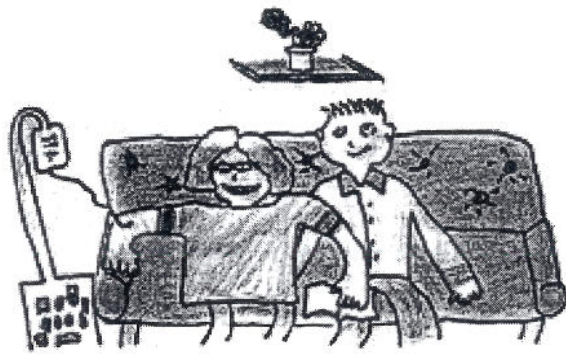
We're waiting for a kidney.

If you're reading my journal, you probably already know more than most grown-ups about what your kidney does. It washes your blood. In fact, your blood goes through your kidney about 400 times a day—kind of like a toxic waste dump in your body.

My Mom's kidney doesn't work so good.



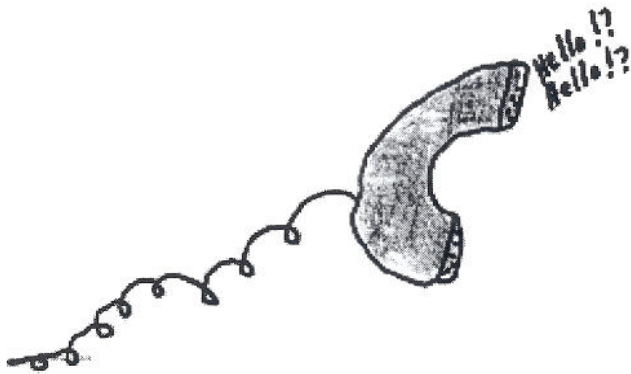
She goes to a place twice a week to hook up to a dialysis machine which does what the kidney does—only outside your body. Once, she let me go with her and she helped me with my math homework.



November:

The trouble with waiting for a kidney is you get real nervous and jumpy. Every time the phone rings we all jump up and listen to see who it is. We have a rule. You have to say the caller's name out loud, so we can all relax. It's usually one of Hannah's dopey friends and

I feel kind of disappointed but relieved too.

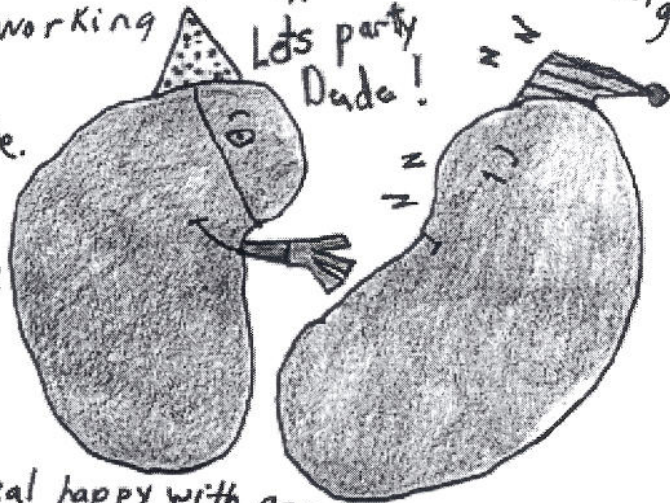


December

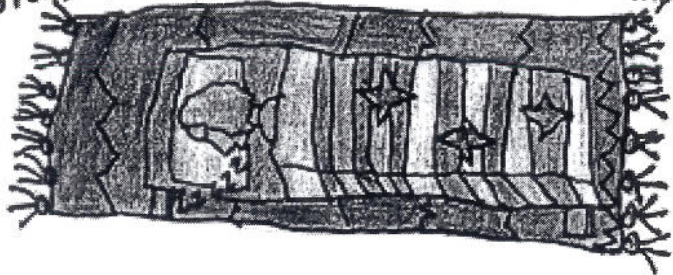
In our computer, Dad found a kidney forum on CompuServe where people talk about waiting for a kidney, getting people to donate kidneys and what it's like after a transplant.

Some kidneys start working right on the operating table.

Some kidneys are sleepy and wake up very slowly.



Mom says she'll be real happy with any



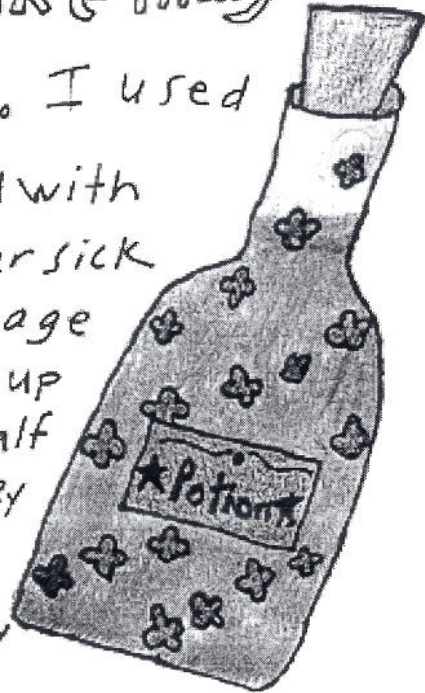
Kind of kidney she can get. She's real tired and takes two naps a day now.

January.

List of ideas to
do NOW to make things better.

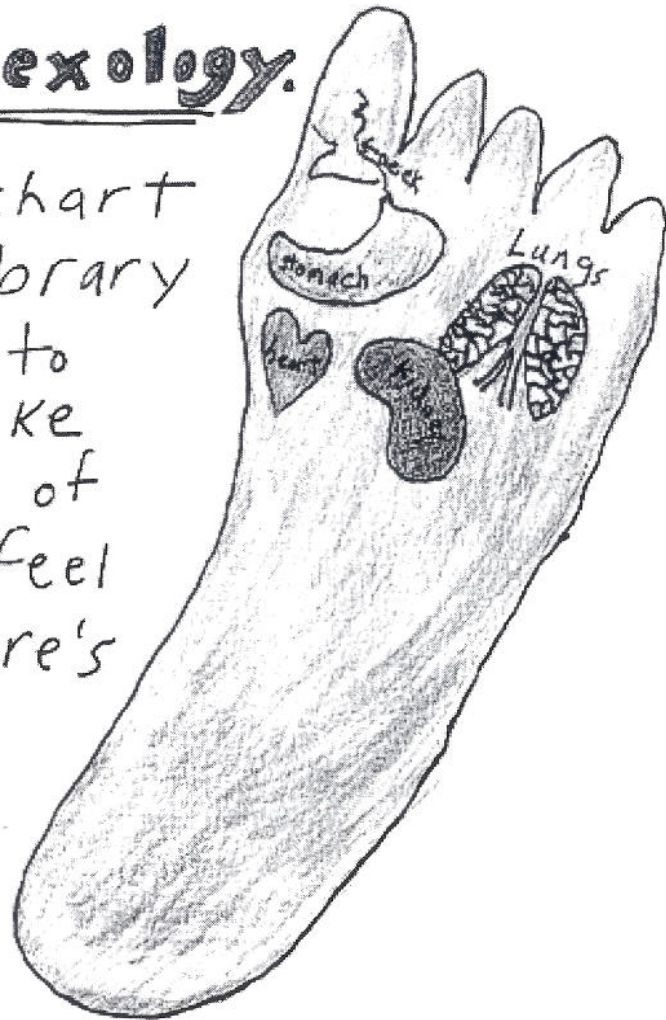
Make a Potion. I used

hand lotion mixed with
cinnamon. Give your sick
person a foot massage
while getting to stay up
and watch an extra half
hour of television. They
have no idea what time
it is because they're so
relaxed they're practically
drooling.



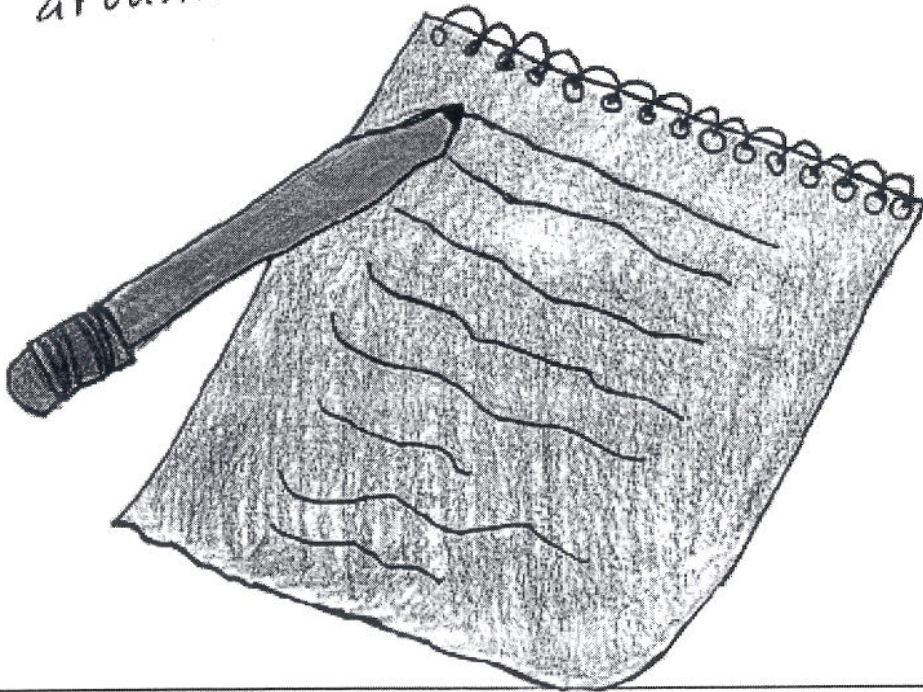
Use Reflexology.

Find a chart at the library of where to rub to make what part of the body feel better. Here's a start.



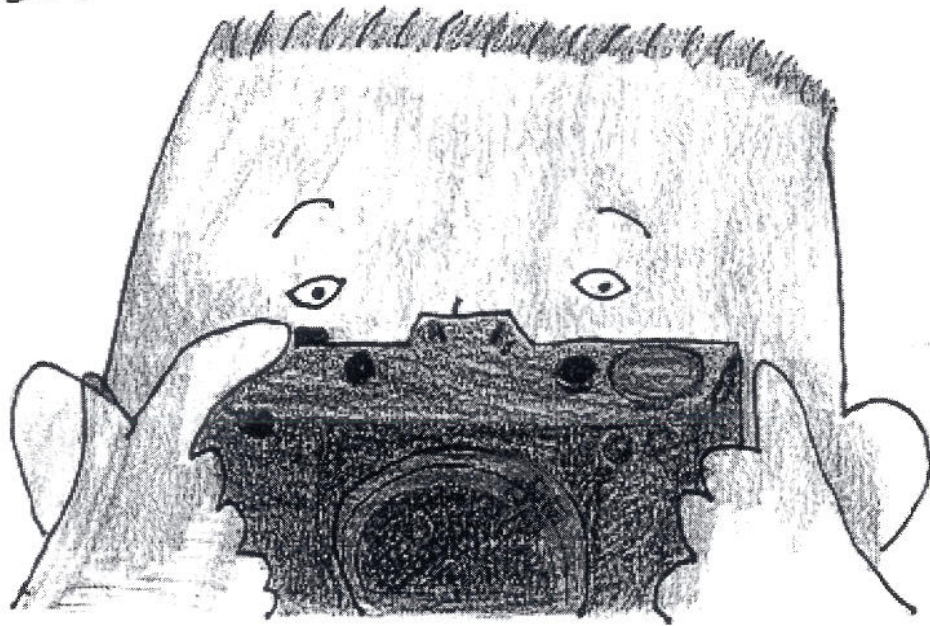
Make a List.

All the things you and your sick person will do when they're feeling better. Start with going to a major theme park and work your way down to kicking a soccer ball around in the backyard.



Take Pictures of Everyone.

Start a scrapbook. Call the first section "The Waiting Period". Leave lots of room after this section.

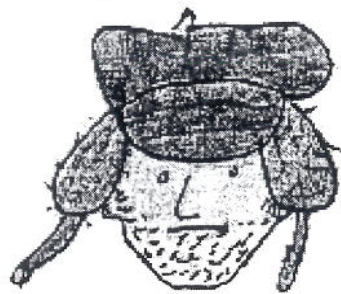


Make lunch and have a picnic
in the living room.

Clean up afterwards. (Mom made me add that.)



TIP There was a lot of fighting
around here this month. Dad says we're
"all stressed out." He made me and Hannah
run around the block with him in the
snow "to relieve tension". I hope
your dad isn't as
weird as mine.



February. Kidneys can come from family or friends and if they match, you don't have to wait—you're lucky,

Some families like us have to wait for months, sometimes years.

One day Hannah said "People are just selfish! If they're dead, what do they need with their old kidney? Mom said, "When a family loses a loved one like their Mom or dad or child, they're sad—very, very sad. And they sort of feel like all they've got is the person's body and it's hard to think about letting a surgeon cut

into that body and take
anything out."
Yep, even as
bad as we want
a kidney, I can
see how that
could be hard.



March. It was freezing cold-so ugly outside even the wind was dark. We came home from school and Mom was closing the suitcase and dad was on the phone to Grandma telling her to come right away and pick us up.

They were going to the **HOSPITAL** there was finally a

KIDNEY!

Hannah and I still had our backpacks on and we did what we call the "happy happy, joy dance" until we heard

Dad say there was a chance
it might not be a match
and another person would
be there just in case Mom
couldn't use it.

Now the real waiting started.

Grandma treated us like total
babies. She wouldn't tell us any-
thing - "I don't want you to worry -
just go out and play."



Well, I told Dad and he had a talk with Grandma and told her we knew almost as much as the doctors at this point and she could tell us what was really happening.

Finally we heard from Dad the operation went real well. He was crying, he was so happy. ~~we get our mom back~~

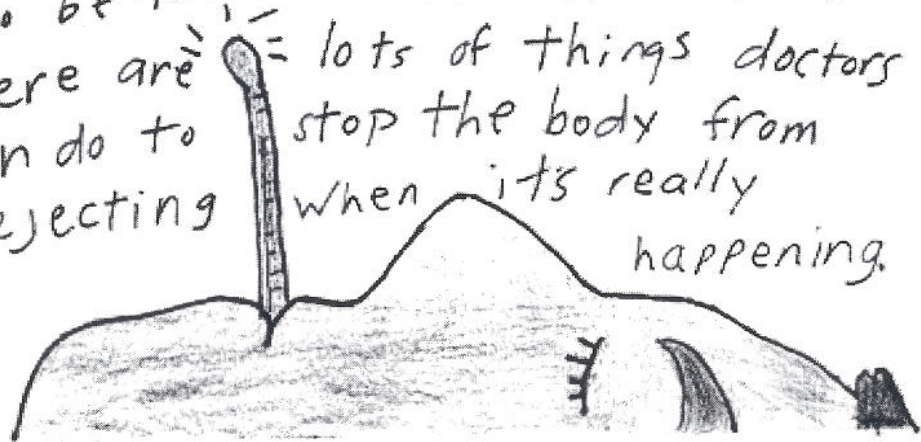
Two Weeks.



We decided to name our new kidney "Lucy" after the I Love Lucy Show. Mom says she started feeling better the minute she woke up. She walks a mile a day with Dad near the hospital. They go to kidney classes and will teach us what they learned when they come **home**.

Four weeks.

We joined a Support Group made up of people like Mom who've had an organ transplant. Their families are there too. One man told how he thought his body was rejecting his new Kidney because he got a fever and didn't feel good but it turned out to be the flu. One Kid told us there are lots of things doctors can do to stop the body from rejecting when it's really happening.



Some people's body had rejected their new organ and they were waiting to try again. Some people had already had a second transplant and were getting better everyday.

It made us feel lucky. Mom and Lucy are getting along fine. Drugs are a big part of Mom's day. You've heard about drugs that are bad for you in school. These are the kinds of drugs that are good for you.

If you've got a new kidney, your body starts to fight it off like it was the ~~enemy~~. Like it would fight off a virus or something.



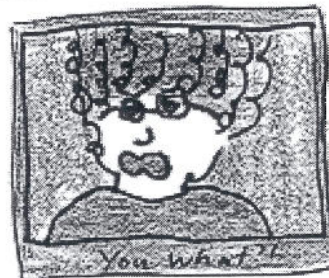
The drugs Mom takes keep that from happening. This kind of drug lets people live. Without all the "meds" or medicines Mom takes every day, she probably wouldn't be alive and getting better.

Mom says I should also tell
about her new chipmunk face.
Her moon face



The medicines make her
cheeks puff out and she sort of
swells up all over. She says
she looks fat and she sometimes
gets angry and upset about that. But we
don't really care.

One other thing you should know,
some of the meds make Mom feel happy



one minute and angry the next minute. Like this is what happens. I got my shower and left my towel and maybe a few other things on the floor in the bathroom. Mom comes in and blows up about the mess. Now, before she might call me a slob and tell me to go pick it up.

Now, it's like a **BOMB** goes off.

It's called a mood swing. Fifteen minutes later she's smiling. Not everyone gets them, but My Mom sure does.

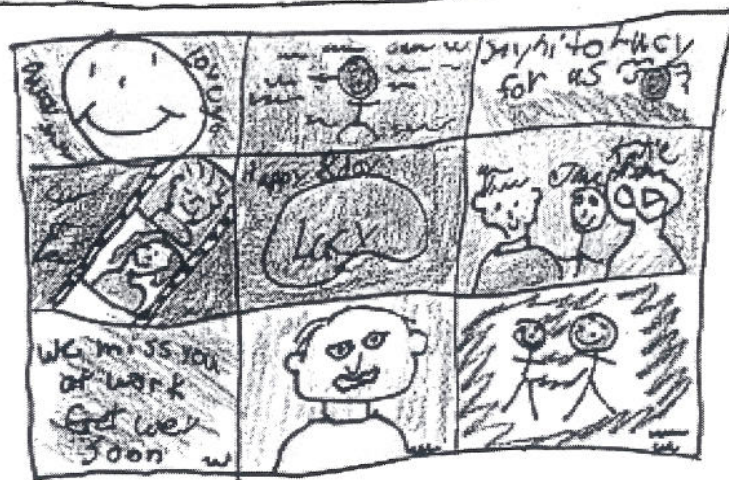
Things

You Can

Do

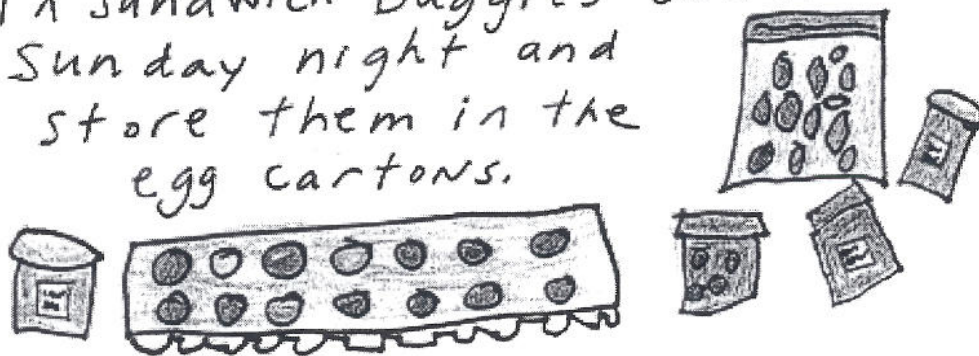
To Help.

Get an old white sheet and a permanent marker pen.



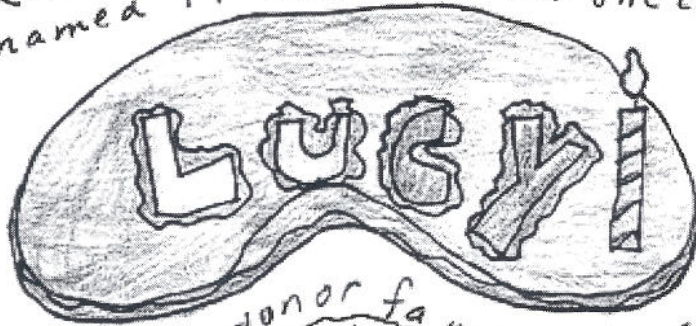
Every time someone comes over with food or flowers, Hannah and I get them into one of our bedrooms and get them to secretly sign the sheet with a picture of themselves and mom and a message. Then, we put a ribbon around it and gave it to mom on Lucy's birthday.

Paint an egg carton. We painted several and gave them to Mom and Dad to use to separate out her pills for each day. She takes 21 pills before breakfast. Hannah and I sing her a song called "I'd Rather Be EATING An Omelet". They put her pills for the whole week in sandwich baggies each Sunday night and store them in the egg cartons.



Celebrate the birthday of your
Family's New Kidney.

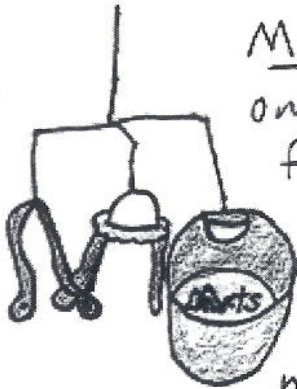
We made a cake. We carved it into
a kidney shape and ate the leftovers.
We named it Lucy and put one candle in it.



Write the donor family who gave you
The Kidney.

If your parents say it's okay. We told them
we were really sorry for them and their
loss, But we were so happy to have our






MOM.



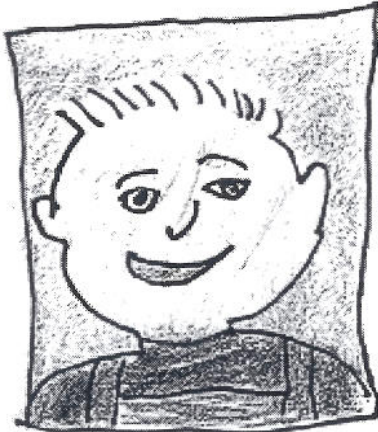
Make a Mobile. We made one out of Mom's favorite things for the first month she was home and in bed a lot. It had Hannah's old baby bonnet and my baseball cup and the "idiot string" dad used to hang his glasses around his neck where he'd be sure to find them.

Make A LIST. Mom and Hannah and I made a list of all the things we'd do together when she was feeling really strong again. We also made a list of all the things we're glad for and thankful for.

Mom read them out loud in Support Group and cried.

I did a science project for school
about the  and how they work.
I'm pretty sure people are getting tired
of hearing from me about  but if more
people talked about  maybe more
people would donate  and I could
shut up.  ← ← kidney of

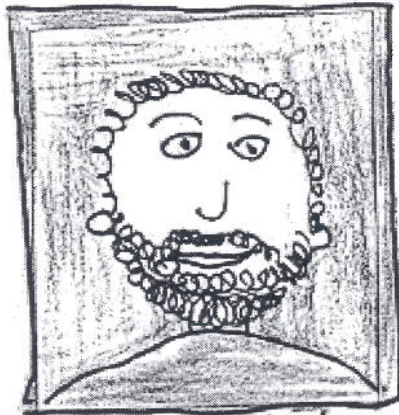
Mom helped me do this journal
because other kids are going to go
through this after me and I
could really have used this stuff
myself - you know, sort of have someone
tell me what to expect and how they
felt.



This is me.



This is my mom whose story this is.



This is my dad who is very happy now.



This is Hannah who did a lot of the pictures. (She's bossy again.)

It's been **3** years since
I started this and I have
only **3** more things
to say.

One. Get them to explain everything
you want to know. Tell them
you'll be less scared if you
understand what's happening.

Two. Do stuff. It helps.

Three. Hang in there, Buddy.

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Pharmaceuticals

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Printed in USA

Roche Laboratories Inc.
340 Kingsland Street
Nutley, New Jersey 07110-1188
www.rocheusa.com

Plandex 104029
18-002-A-104-138-0900