

Let's Talk About...

Juvenile idiopathic arthritis

Juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) is a chronic inflammatory arthritis that affects children younger than 16 years old. If your child has JIA, the immune system attacks the synovium (tissue lining a joint), making it swell and causing pain and stiffness. JIA can damage the cartilage and bone if it isn't treated.

What causes JIA?

JIA is an autoimmune disease, which means the immune system attacks organs in its own body. The exact cause of JIA is not known, but it is probably caused by both genetic and environmental factors.

What are the symptoms of JIA?

Children with JIA may have some or all of these symptoms:

- Pain and swelling in the joints
- Limping and stiffness in the morning
- Fatigue

- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck
- Clumsiness
- High fever and rash
- Eye pain, blurred vision, or vision loss

How can JIA affect the eyes?

Some children with JIA may develop uveitis (you-vee-ITE-iss), where the inner eye becomes red and sore. Uveitis does not cause any symptoms in most children, but it can cause eye damage and vision problems if it isn't treated. Children with JIA must have regular visits with an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) to make sure they do not have uveitis.

How is JIA diagnosed?

Your child's healthcare provider will give your child a physical exam and ask about their symptoms. They may order x-rays and blood tests as well.

Children who have JIA:

- Are younger than 16 years old when the arthritis starts.
- Have had arthritis for more than 6 weeks.
- Have arthritis for no other reason (no other virus or disease is causing it).

How is JIA treated?

Your child's healthcare provider will focus on relieving your child's joint pain and swelling. They will also help your child strengthen their joints and prevent bone and cartilage damage. JIA treatments may include:

- Exercise
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy



