

Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

What is it?

Juvenile idiopathic arthritis is a type of arthritis that develops in a child aged 16 or younger. It causes joint inflammation and stiffness.

Researchers still don't know what causes juvenile idiopathic arthritis. In Australia, at least 5000 children are affected by the disease at any one time. Symptoms can last months or years. For many young people, symptoms disappear completely with no long-term side effects.

If your child is diagnosed, don't panic – there are many treatments and resources available to help your child manage their symptoms.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will assess your child's symptoms and perform a physical examination to decide if you need a referral to a specialist. Your GP will also:

- Give your child options for pain relief
- Prescribe medications to help manage symptoms
- Give you exercises and strategies for your child's joint function
- Provide resources, supports and education
- Check for medication side effects
- Help you manage any flares (periods of joint pain or swelling)
- Arrange a blood test and prepare an ongoing care plan
- Refer your child to a specialist, called a paediatric rheumatologist, and help you access a team of health professionals who can help
- Continue to manage your child's overall health and wellbeing, including immunisations, weight and growth

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will continue to monitor your child's health and treatment with regular check-ups. You may need to be reviewed regularly by a specialist, called a paediatric rheumatologist, if your child's symptoms get worse.

Your GP might also discuss strategies to inform the school and help you manage any special arrangements needed.

What can I do?

Continue to care for your child as best you can. Keep a record of your child's symptoms, and know what to do in the event of a flare.

Change your child's routine so activities like sports are easier. You don't have to avoid exercise altogether. Talk to your GP about ways you can keep your child active to maintain muscle strength and flexibility.

Remember, stay positive. Seek out local support groups and connect with other parents who are going through the same thing.

When should I call an ambulance?



If your child develops a high fever and appears unwell, phone Triple 0 (000) or visit the nearest emergency department.

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What supports are available?

Liverpool Hospital Paediatric Rheumatology Clinic:

The clinic is located at Clinic 112, Level 1, Lift B, Liverpool Hospital. Phone **8738 4088**

The Children's Hospital at Westmead Paediatric Rheumatology Clinic:

The clinic is located at Outpatients and Bandaged Bear Clinics, Children's Hospital Westmead, Corner Hawkesbury Rd and Hainsworth St, Westmead. Phone **9845 2525**

Sydney Children's Hospital Rheumatology Clinic:

The clinic is located at Paediatric Rheumatology Clinic, Children's Outpatient Clinic, Level 0, High Street, Randwick. Phone **9382 1597**

Private health professionals:

You can access private paediatric rheumatologists or allied health professionals - speak to your GP about a referral and rebates.



What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What causes my child's condition?*
- What treatment options are available?*
- Will my child need surgery?*
- Do I call you if my child is having a flare?*
- How can I manage a flare?*
- Will my child grow out of this condition?*
- What risks do I need to be aware of?*
- Where can I learn more?*



Where can I learn more?

- **Arthritis Australia:** arthritisaustralia.com.au
- **Arthritis Foundation** – kids get arthritis too: kidsgetarthritisoo.org
- **Better Health Channel** – calcium: betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- **Disease and medication information:** rheumatology.org.au
- **Arthritis Australia** – juvenile arthritis: arthritisaustralia.com.au
- **Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis Organisation:** jia.org.uk
- **Sydney Children's Hospitals Network** – chronic illness fact sheet: schn.health.nsw.gov.au
- **The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne** – information on JIA for young people: rch.org.au
- **The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne** – information for parents: rch.org.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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