



Physiotherapy

JUVENILE IDIOPATHIC ARTHRITIS

Your physiotherapist

- is part of your rheumatology team
- knows how joints and muscles work

Your physiotherapist can

- help keep your muscles strong
- tell you about suitable physical activities
- give advice on splinting and protective equipment
- discuss ways to reduce stress on painful and inflamed joints
- answer your questions
- plan exercises to keep your joints moving normally and to help reduce the pain of JIA.

Physical activity

Physical activity and exercise should be a part of every day. It can:

- help your mood and confidence
- make you more independent
- keep your joints flexible
- make your muscles strong

Take part in activities and games with other kids. Take a rest when you feel tired or sore. The amount of activity you can do will change from day to day, as will the amount of pain and swelling that you might have.

It is OK to limit your activity when you are unwell or your joints are hurting.

With long distance activities, like cross-country running or bushwalking, take a break and have a rest when you need to.

Avoid carrying heavy weights, like heavy school bags or heavy books. Try to spread the weight over many joints rather than only one. Use a backpack on both shoulders instead of a carry bag.

Flare up – try these activities

If your JIA flares up, activities like swimming, especially in a heated pool, cycling and walking are good. When your JIA is well controlled, you can do normal activities and games like most people your age.

Flare up – avoid these activities

Avoid activities that jar or overstress your joints, like:

- jumping on a mat, floor or trampoline
- throwing and catching hard or heavy balls
- using heavy bats in ball games
- contact sports or competitive sports
- repetitive activities

These activities can usually be changed, for example by using lighter bats and softer balls.

Pain reduction techniques – things to do when you are in pain

Move Around

Everyone gets stiff when they stay in one position for too long. This is also true for young people with JIA. Changing your position often for a short time will reduce joint pain and stiffness. You might have to get up and move 2 or 3 times an hour for a couple of minutes. Or just change what you are doing and do something else for a short time.

Take A Break

A short break from an activity can give you enough relief to let you go on with the activity after the break. Playing until you are worn out may cause joint pain and make you too tired to try other activities. Take a break when you need it.

Heat/Cold

Pain in a joint can be relieved with a hot water bottle or hot pack wrapped in a towel. Some young people don't like a hot pack. A cold pack is OK. Use the kind that suits you.

Splints

Splints are used to:

- rest or support an inflamed, sore joint
- stretch out a joint that is losing movement
- help a movement that is difficult

You might wear splints at school, especially for your wrists or in your shoes. Splints should not be taken off during the day unless your therapist says this is OK. Wear them like your therapist told you.

If a splint is rubbing or hurting, mark the area with a pen or marker and let your therapist know as soon as possible.

Questions

If you have any questions about your exercise or your daily activities – or anything – please ask your physiotherapist.

Notes
