

Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month: July

What is Juvenile Arthritis (JA)?^[1]

Juvenile arthritis (JA), or pediatric rheumatic disease, is a term to describe the inflammatory and rheumatic diseases that develop in children under the age of 16.



Symptoms and Health Effects of JA^[1]



- **Joints:** Red, swollen, stiff, painful, tender, and warm joints, making movement and daily tasks difficult.



- **Skin:** Scaly red rash (psoriatic), light pink rash (systemic), butterfly-shaped rash on the nose and cheeks (lupus), or thick, hardened skin patches (scleroderma).



- **Eyes:** Dryness, pain, redness, light sensitivity, and vision problems from uveitis (chronic eye inflammation).



- **Internal Organs:** Can affect the digestive tract (diarrhea, bloating), lungs (shortness of breath), and heart.



- **Other Symptoms:** Fatigue, appetite loss, and high spiking fever.

Types of JA^[1]

- Juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- Juvenile myositis
- Juvenile lupus
- Juvenile scleroderma
- Vasculitis
- Fibromyalgia



Diagnosis of JA^{[1][3]}

- **Laboratory Tests:** Check for inflammatory markers (e.g. Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR or "sed rate") and C-reactive protein (CRP), Antinuclear antibody (ANA), complete blood count (CBC), liver and kidney function tests).^[3]
- **Imaging Tests:** Use X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs to detect joint damage and eliminate other potential causes, such as trauma or infection.^[1]

Treatments & Managements of JA^[1]

- Medications
- Surgery
- Non-drug therapies (e.g. exercise)
- Physical Therapies and Assistive Devices (e.g. braces, splints, hand grips)



Living with JA^[2]

- Normal activities such as attending school, playing sports, joining extracurricular and family activities are encouraged.
- Exercise is encouraged, it does not worsen arthritis symptoms, helps in preventing deconditioning, and builds muscle strength and endurance to support joints.



References
[1] Arthritis Foundation. (n.d.). Juvenile Arthritis. www.arthritis.org/diseases/juvenile-arthritis
[2] Cleveland Clinic. (2019). Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/10370-juvenile-idiopathic-arthritis>
[3] National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. (2021). Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA): Diagnosis, Treatment, and Steps to Take. <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/juvenile-arthritis/diagnosis-treatment-and-steps-to-take#:~:text=Diagnosis%20of%20Juvenile%20Idiopathic%20Arthritis>