

- 1 in 4 Americans including 300,000 children have arthritis.
- Arthritis is usually an autoimmune disorder, where the immune system attacks some of the body's own healthy cells and tissues.

Juvenile arthritis affects children of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. There are several forms of arthritis affecting children, however, the most common is juvenile idiopathic arthritis (idiopathic means from unknown causes). Medical professionals think juvenile arthritis is genetic and something like a virus then sets off the disease.

Understanding the Effects of Juvenile Arthritis

Arthritis is caused by inflammation of the joints causing pain, swelling, and stiffness that doesn't go away. Children experiencing arthritis may have these common symptoms:

Physical

Loss of motion

Swollen lymph nodes

Growth Problems

Eye Issues



Psychological

Social withdrawal or isolation

Irritability or anger

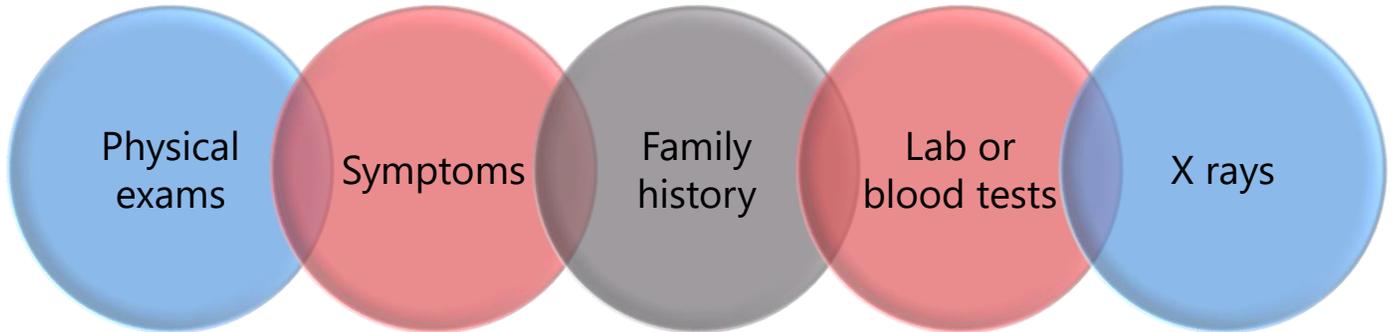
Low self-esteem

Depression

They may significantly impact a child's ability to participate in social or after school activities and can make schoolwork more difficult. Most children with arthritis have times when the symptoms get better and other times when they get worse.

Diagnosing Juvenile Arthritis

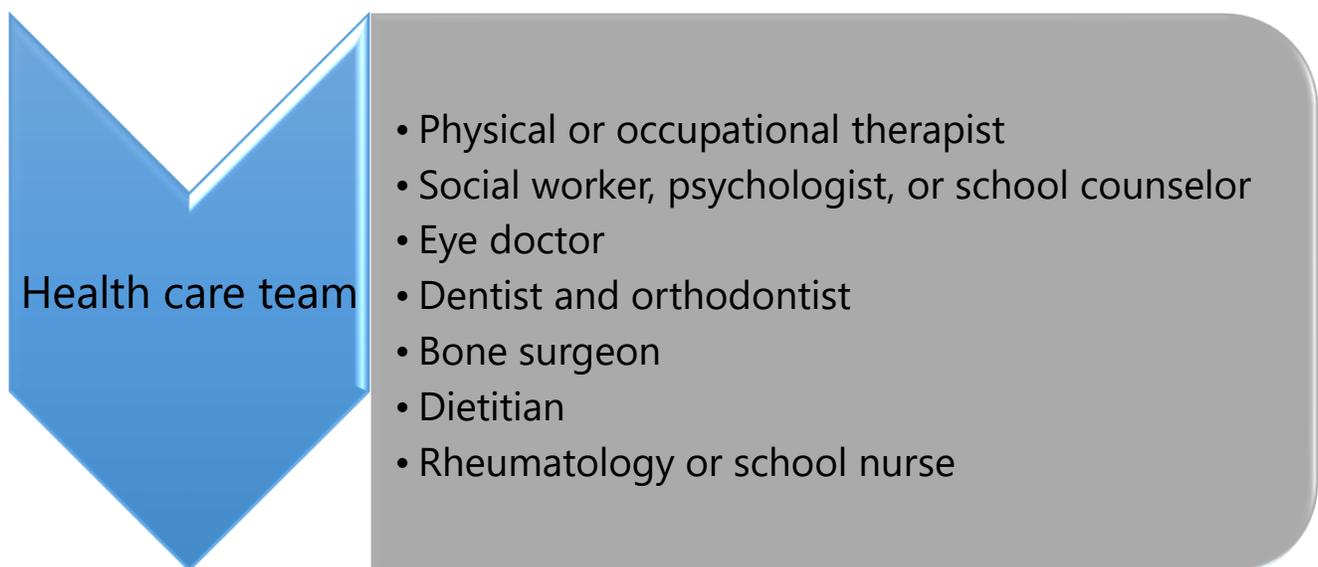
Doctors usually suspect arthritis when a child has constant joint pain, swelling, skin rashes that can't be explained, fever along with enlarged lymph nodes, or inflammation in the body's organs. To determine if it is juvenile arthritis, doctors depend on:



Treating Juvenile Arthritis

Doctors can prescribe treatments or medicine to reduce swelling, maintain joint movement, and relieve pain. They will also try to prevent, identify, and treat other problems resulting from arthritis. Exercise is key to reducing the symptoms of arthritis. Ask your doctor for exercise guidelines so your child can remain as physically active as possible.

A team approach is the best way to treat juvenile arthritis. Your child's health care team may include:



They should focus on making sure your child remains physically active, stays involved in social activities, and has a support system for an overall good quality of life.

Living with Juvenile Arthritis

Juvenile arthritis affects the whole family. You can help your child both physically and emotionally by doing the following:

Getting the best care possible.

Learning about your child's disease and its treatment.

Talking with your child about his/her condition and feelings.

Joining a support group.

Working with therapists or social workers.

Treating your child as normal as possible.

Encouraging exercise and physical therapy.

Working closely with your child's school.

For informational purposes only. Consult a medical professional for advice.

Sources: The Arthritis National Research Foundation, www.CureArthritis.org

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases,
www.niams.nih.gov