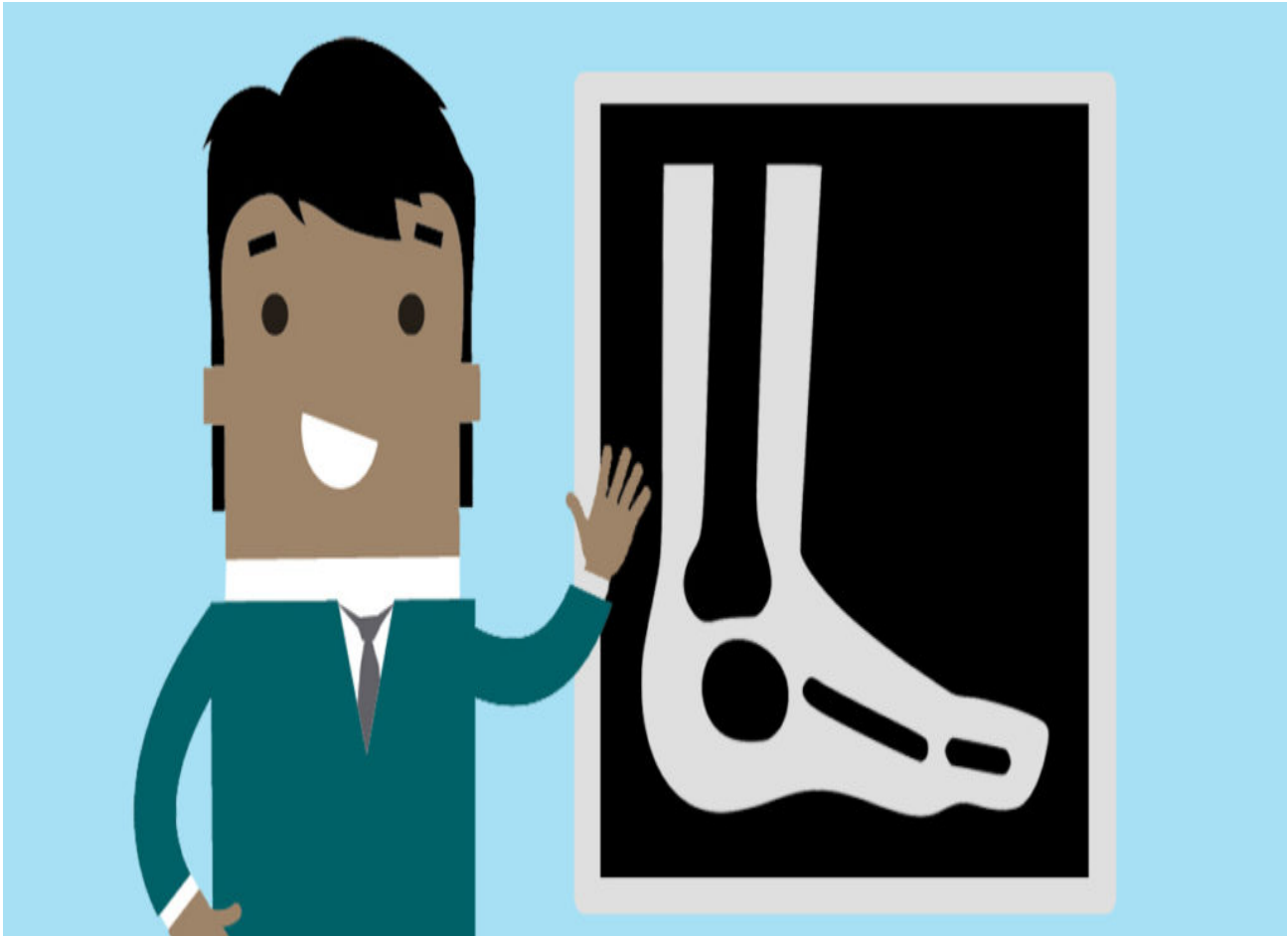


Podiatrist

A podiatrist is the person who will assess, diagnose and treat problems that may affect your child's feet and ankle. Your child may see a podiatrist if they are suffering from any pain or discomfort when walking or running, for example.

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Your child may need to visit a podiatrist if they are suffering from any pain or discomfort when walking or running or if the doctors looking after them are concerned about the position or function of their feet, or how the feet may be affecting other joints in the lower limb, such as the knees. If you, yourself, have any concerns about your child's feet you can also speak to your child's healthcare team to ask about a referral to the podiatrist. How often your child sees the podiatrist will vary

depending on their need and may also depend on their local Trust's access policy. You can frequently self-refer to a local Trust's podiatry service or you can seek an appointment with a private podiatrist. You should ensure that the podiatrist that your child sees is a podiatrist with a specialism in paediatrics.

A podiatrist is part of the multi-disciplinary team and is the person who will assess, diagnose and treat problems that may affect your child's feet and ankles. They do this by looking at how the joints in the feet and ankles move as well as the alignment of the foot in relation to the ankle, knees and hips. They will also look at how your child walks to see how the lower limb joints work together with the ankle and foot as well as the positioning of the joints whilst your child is walking.

The pain, discomfort, fatigue and problems that can occur when your child is walking or running happen because, if the inflammation is not controlled, the joints swell and this causes the soft tissues (ligaments and tendons) to become stretched. The muscles around the inflamed joints will also weaken. This occurs especially in joints that take the body's weight (hips, knees and ankles). Over time this can lead to poor control and positioning of the joints and once the swelling surrounding the joint(s) has gone down, the soft tissue that has been stretched may not go back into its correct position.

All of this leads to the bones of the lower leg not being aligned correctly and this means that the leg may not function in the same way a child without JIA does. If the bones of the feet and lower leg are not lined up properly, they will not work together as one unit when it comes to walking. This can lead to problems with the knees, hips and lower back and walking can become very tiring.

Treating any of the problems which your child may be experiencing with their gait may be as simple as giving advice on what footwear is suitable for your child or, if necessary, they may prescribe the use of insoles (orthoses) which are used to enhance the function of the foot or take the stress off an overused ligament or tendon. Research has suggested that orthoses can improve pain, function and quality of life in children with JIA. The podiatrist may also prescribe muscle strengthening or stretches. This management will reduce the pain and discomfort that your child may be experiencing.

A podiatrist can also treat other foot problems your child may have ranging from in-growing toenails to hard skin.

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