Resource

Symptoms of JIA

JIA is more than just painful joints. There are a number of symptoms that may be experienced and age is a big factor in this, as younger children may experience symptoms that they are not able to verbalise. This article will help you to understand possible symptoms in different age groups.

Print

Introduction

The information that follows is an attempt to guide parents or other concerned adults in how to tell their own particular story about their child to a doctor or other health professional.

Your concerns may only be an uncomfortable instinctive feeling that all is not quite right. It is very likely you do not feel that any one symptom or problem is sufficiently ‘troublesome’ or would mean very much if that is your only concern. However, it may be that when you look through the lists there could be one or two (or more) situations that match with your own experiences.

There are many times during childhood when parents and carers have concerns about them for a multitude of reasons. Many of these concerns are the result of normal things, for example suffering from normal childhood illnesses, trips and tumbles, falling out with friends and so on.

We hope that the following three sections divided into what to consider in very young, young and older children who may be developing arthritis will allow you to jot down what you have observed and help you explain your concerns to a doctor.

This website is developed to help parents whose child or young person has been diagnosed with the juvenile form of arthritis. This condition is rare (approximately 1 child in every 1000 is diagnosed with juvenile arthritis) and most people do not know it exists, unlike childhood diabetes which has almost the same incidence.

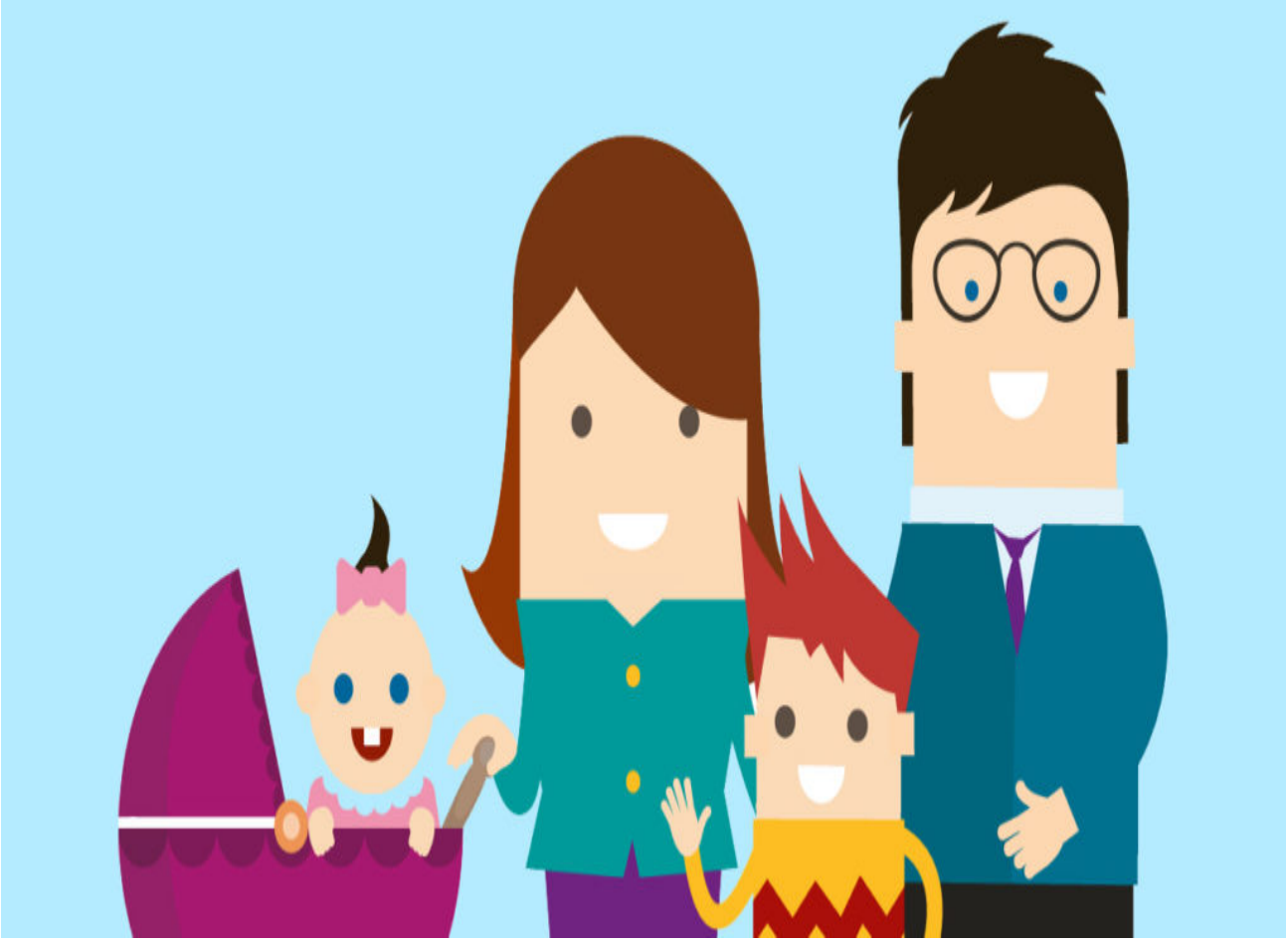
Our aim is to help parents ‘tell their whole story’ with all relevant information’ to their GP so that referral to a specialist centre can be arranged. The specialist will expect to see any child whose symptoms may be the start of juvenile arthritis, especially if those symptoms have lasted on and off for around 6 weeks, because early diagnosis and treatment is vitally important.

Eye symptoms

JIA can be associate with uveitis (eye inflammation). It is therefore important to note any concerns regarding eyes, such as redness or changes in vision.

Early treatment is the key to successful control of childhood arthritis.

Symptoms in babies and very young children



Is your child stiff?

- Is he/she slow to get moving, especially after rest or sleep?
- Do any joints appear stiff, for example limping when walking?

Is your child in pain?

- Do any joints appear tender when you move them, for example when dressing, bathing or during other routine activities?
- Can you see any evidence to explain crying or can he/she tell you?
- Is it difficult to comfort your child?
- Has this happened before; how often?
- Is he/she fretful?

Has expected development slowed down?

- requesting to be carried
- delayed crawling/walking
- Have you noticed your child using their joints in a different way?
  eg using knuckles to help standing from the floor rather than wrists
  (when flat of hand is normally used to push up)
- not wanting cuddles
- regression in use of potty

Is your child fretful/unhappy?

- unexplained weight loss
- obvious signs of child being miserable/listless
- poor sleep pattern
- waking up upset

Do you see any physical signs?

- swollen/hot joint(s)
- swollen glands
- fever – may come & go
- rash – may come & go
- anything else (including redness of eyes or changes in vision)

Symptoms in young children

Is your child stiff?

- Is he/she slow to get moving, especially after rest or sleep?
- Do any joints appear stiff, for example limping when walking?

Is your child in pain?

- Do any joints appear tender when they move, for example during normal daily activities?
- Can you see any evidence to explain crying or can he/she tell you?
- Is it difficult to comfort your child?
- Has this happened before; how often?

Is your child unhappy?

- Is there unexplained weight loss?
- Can you see obvious signs of your child being miserable/listless?
- Is he/she irritable, moaning, angry?
- Is he/she reluctant to join in with ordinary activities?
- Do you notice his/her tiredness, weariness, low energy?
- Is he/she not wanting to go to school?

Do you see any physical signs?

- swollen/hot joint(s)
- swollen glands
- fever – may come & go
- rash – may come & go
- anything else (including redness of eyes or changes in vision)

Symptoms in pre-teen and teenage children

Is your young person stiff?

- Is he/she slow to get moving, especially after rest or sleep?
- Do any joints appear stiff, for example limping when walking?

Is your young person in pain?

- Do any joints appear tender when they move, for example during normal daily activities? Can you see this, has he/she told you
- Is he/she complaining of:
  – groin strain

– sore ankle(s)/wrist(s)
– stiff, swollen knee(s)/ankle(s), wrist(s)
– really sore toe(s), finger(s)
– achy neck

- Does he/she have common cold/flu-like symptoms?
- Has this happened before; many times?
- Is he/she slow to get moving and using joints on waking/stiff?

Do you see any physical signs?

- swollen/hot joint(s)
- swollen glands
- fever – may come & go
- rash – may come & go
- anything else (including redness of eyes or changes in vision)

Do you feel you have an unhappy young person?

- Is there unexplained weight loss?
- Are there obvious signs of being miserable/listless?
- Is there a reluctance to participate?
- Do you feel he/she is becoming isolated?
- Is he/she irritable, moaning, stroppy, angry?
- Is he/she not wanting to go to school?
- Do you notice tiredness, weariness, low energy? = fatigue
- Do you feel there might be a physical cause for this interference with daily life or do you need to consider
  bullying or other emotional causes?

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