

Quick Tip Sheet for Supporting Students who have Juvenile Arthritis

General Overview:

Juvenile arthritis (JA) is the term used to describe arthritis, or inflammation of the joints, in children ages 16 years or younger. JA is typically an autoimmune disorder, in which the immune system attacks some of the body's own healthy cells and tissues. Children with JA may experience a wide range of symptoms which are listed below; these symptoms can also "flare" and become even more problematic at times. Despite painful and distracting symptoms, students with JA are generally able to participate in school and achieve academic success. To ensure academic success, accommodations can be made to help students cope with symptoms of JA. Below, you will find common effects (physical, emotional, and learning) and accommodations to support the effects.

Physical Side Effects

- Pain (difficulty walking, raising head, and/or hands)
- Fatigue (difficulty performing everyday tasks)
- Stiffness and swelling in one or more joints
- Loss of motion
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, heartburn, gas or bloating, and mouth sores (due to medications)
- Difficulty sitting for long periods of time



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Emotional
Side Effects

- Change in mood (due to fatigue and pain; as well as some types of medications)
- Isolation from classmates
- Stress related to missed time from school and fear of future disability

LEARNING
EFFECTS

- Decreased concentration (due to fatigue and pain)
- Poor academic performance (due to absences and fatigue)
- Tardy/Absences (due to morning pain or appointments)

Accommodations to Meet Student Needs:

- Access to snacks (if taking medication during school)
- Planned breaks/purposeful movement (every 30-60 minutes)
- Extra time when switching classes (if experiencing difficulty walking)
- Extra set of books in the classroom and at home
- Modify physical education class (as needed)
- Access to simple devices such as a footstool, desktop book holder or floor pillow (as needed)
- Access to computer, special pencil and pen grips
- Copy of notes (as needed)
- Reteaching and/or tutoring for missed instruction
- Homebound instruction for extended absences
- Shorten and prioritize assignments (as needed)
- Emphasize **QUALITY** over **QUANTITY** with respect to assignments