

What is a flare?

A flare is when arthritis symptoms come back or get worse after they have been better. Symptoms can change from day to day.

- They may get much better. Your child may be doing well without problems. Then symptoms return all of a sudden.
- Symptoms may come back slowly. You may not notice them at first.

A flare can happen at any time, but some things may make it more likely. This includes:

- Recent infection.
- Missed dose or change in dose of medicine.
- Growth spurt that requires a change to their medicines.

What should I do if a flare starts?

Track symptoms. Write down:

- Which joints are affected.
- Your child's pain level. Use a scale of 0 to 10. Zero means no pain. Ten means the worst possible pain.
- Morning stiffness if present.
- Other recent symptoms such as fever, rash, cough, congestion, vomiting or diarrhea.

Home care

- Use gentle movement and rest when needed.
 - Have your child move and stretch without causing too much pain. The more your child sits or lies down, the stiffer they will feel. Stretch the muscles above and below the affected joint to help decrease pain and stiffness.
 - We want kids at school if possible. It gives them a reason to move and helps distract them from symptoms.
 - Make sure your child also has time to rest.
- It often helps to switch between heat and ice. For 10 to 15 minutes at a time:
 - Use heat for stiffness.
 - Use ice for swelling.
- Give NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as naproxen, meloxicam and ibuprofen) as prescribed by your child's doctor.
 - Make sure to give with food to help prevent stomach upset and irritation.
 - Do not give more than one NSAID at a time (such as both naproxen and ibuprofen).
- Do not add or change medicines without your doctor's advice.
- Do not start steroids unless your child's doctor tells you to.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Arthritis flare, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Call your pediatrician if your child:

- Is sick for more than 2 to 3 days.
- Has a fever of 100.4°F or higher.

It is important to make sure they do not have an infection that needs antibiotics or other medicines.

Mild flares related to a recent infection may only last 2 to 3 days. **Call your rheumatology care team at 404-785-8330 if your child:**

- Has pain or stiffness that lasts more than 2 weeks.
- Has a red, hot joint with fever (temperature higher than 100.4)
- Has a fever without cold or flu symptoms.
- Cannot put weight on a joint.
- Cannot take or keep down their medicines.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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