

# Arthritis



Grade	<u>4</u>
Fiction	<u>      </u>
Poetry	<u>      </u>
Nonfiction	<u>X</u>

# Arthritis

Did you know? There are nearly 300,000 kids in the United States living with some type of arthritis. Most people think arthritis only affects adults. I happen to be one of those kids with arthritis. I have three different types of arthritis: Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA), Oligoarthritis, and Enthesitis Arthritis. Each one affects my body in different ways. Arthritis is considered an auto-immune disease in kids, so that changes how my body works and how they can control my arthritis flare-ups.

When I was three, I woke up one morning, unable to walk. My parents took me to the doctor to figure out what was wrong with me. The doctor took x-rays and blood work. The doctor didn't know what was wrong, so he sent me home. A couple weeks later, my parents took me to the hospital because the pain was worse. The hospital took even more x-rays and gave me an I.V. They were not able to figure out what was wrong with me, so they put my leg in a cast and sent me home. The next day my mom took me to a different doctor, and he told us we would have to go to Salt Lake to the hospital there. The first doctor I saw in Salt Lake was an orthopedist, and he couldn't help me because there wasn't anything wrong with my bones. He sent me to a rheumatologist, which is a doctor that helps people with arthritis. My rheumatologist took more bloodwork and looked at every joint in my body. Then I had to get an MRI, which sounds scary, but they gave me medicine to make me sleep. They found out I had arthritis in my hip. To try to get rid of it, they gave me a steroid injection in my hip that same day, and I had to go on a medicine that is a shot. Luckily, the doctor taught my mom and dad how to give me shots, so I can do them at home in my bed where I am more comfortable. They sometimes make me feel nauseous. I get to pick out special band aids though, which helps a little bit.

Now I am 9, and I still have arthritis. It is in my hips, back, knee, the middle of my foot, ankle, and my hands. It makes going to school hard some days, especially when I am hurting and my joints don't want to work. I have pain every day, even though I take pain medicine. I try not to let my pain stop me from being a normal kid, but sometimes it does. My arthritis also makes me really tired, too. Some days I want to just lay in bed all day! I have to have an MRI every year because of my arthritis so the doctor can see what it is doing to my joints. I see my rheumatologist every 3 months. She is really nice, even though she makes me get poked by needles a lot. Because of my different medicines, I have to have my blood checked at every appointment. My liver doesn't like all of the medicine I have to take, so we have to be careful about how long I take the

medicine for. Another reason the doctors take my blood is to see my white blood cell count. My medicine makes this number go down, so when I get sick, I have to stay home until it comes back up again. I have to take steroids a lot when I am sick or having a flare-up. They help my body fight whatever is hurting it, but they make me hungry and angry.

As I said before, I have three types of arthritis. JIA is arthritis in kids, and there is no medical reason for it. It is not genetic or hereditary, and there is no cure. I also have Oligoarthritis, which means I have it in more than one joint. It also can affect my eyes, so I have to go to a special eye doctor every 6 months. The last kind I have is called Enthesitis arthritis. It is the tricky kind because it can be found anywhere a ligament or tendon attaches to a bone. I have it in a ligament in the top of my foot.

While there are tons of bad things about arthritis, there are some positive things, too. Last summer I got to go to Camp Koda, which is a camp just for kids with arthritis. There I learned that I am not alone, and I got to meet other kids just like me that know what I am going through. My favorite part of arthritis camp was that my doctor was there to help me. She was part of the medical team that stayed with us and gave us our medicine when we needed it. I stayed there for three days, and had so much fun. We got to learn about our disease, and how to overcome it. I got homesick while I was there, but my counselors were awesome and helped me feel better. While it was a lot of fun, the most important thing I learned was how to advocate for myself and what I need to be comfortable and successful.

One thing my mom always tells me is that I am a warrior, and warriors do not give up. I will never give up trying to defeat arthritis. My family and friends have hope for me, and I have faith in myself.