



Grandparents Corner

July 2013

Juvenile Arthritis

Arthritis typically affects joints. The word “arthritis” means joint inflammation; however, JA (Juvenile Arthritis) can involve the eyes, skin and gastrointestinal tract as well.

In addition, there are several types of Juvenile Arthritis. As JA rises, researchers and doctors are working to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the differences between the different forms.

The most common type of JA is Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA). To receive a diagnosis, a child should be younger than 16 and have initial swelling in one or more joints for at least six weeks.

Juvenile Arthritis affects the entire family, all of whom must cope with the special challenges of this disease. JA can strain a child’s participation in school activities, and make school work more difficult. Family members can do several things to help the child physically and emotionally.

- **Have the best care possible.** Make sure the child receives appropriate medical care and follows the doctor’s instructions. If possible, have a pediatric rheumatologist manage your child’s care.
- **Learn as much as you can about your child’s disease and its treatment.** Many treatment options are available, and because JA is different in each child, what works for one may not work for another.
- **Join a support group.** Try to find other parents and kids who face similar experiences. It can help you and your child.
- **Treat the child as normally as possible.** Try not to cut your child too much slack just because they may have arthritis. Too much protection can keep your child from being responsible and independent and can cause resentment in siblings.
- **Encourage exercise and physical therapy.** For many young people, exercise and physical therapy play important roles in managing JA. You can arrange for children to participate in activities that the doctor recommends. During symptom-free periods, many doctors suggest playing team sports. The goal is to keep the joints strong and flexible.
- **Work closely with your child’s school.** Help their school develop a suitable lesson plan, and educate your child’s teacher and classmates about JA. Some children with JA may be absent from school for prolonged periods of time and need to have the teacher send assignments home.
- **Talk with your child.** Explain that having JA is nobody’s fault. Some children may believe that JA is a punishment for something they did. Let your child know you are always available to listen and help them in any way you can.
- **Work with therapists or social workers.** They can help you and your child adapt more easily to the lifestyle changes JA may bring.

Sources:

Arthritis Foundation - www.arthritis.org

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases - www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Juv_Arthritis/default.asp

Natural disasters often strike in summer. You might not have access to food, water or electricity. By taking time now to prepare emergency water and food supplies, and a disaster supplies kit, you can provide for the person in your care.

Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. The average person requires at least one (1) gallon of water a day for drinking, food preparation and basic hygiene. T F
2. A one (1) day supply of special food should be adequate. T F
3. Medicines should be replenished at least three (3) days BEFORE they are used up.
T F
4. Always keep a shut-off valve wrench near the gas and water shut-off valves in your home. T F
5. In recent years, excessive heat has caused more deaths than all other weather events, including hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes combined.
T F
6. Call 9-1-1 if the person has blue lips and fingernails, a high fever, difficulty breathing, a seizure, is confused or behaving irrationally, or has lost consciousness. T F
7. People with chronic diseases (like heart or lung diseases) are most at risk of developing heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heatstroke. T F
8. Air-conditioning is one of the best protections against heat-related illness and death.
T F
9. Those taking diuretics (water pills) and beta-blockers never get heat-related illnesses.
T F
10. Fluid balance can be affected by medication, emotional stress, exercise, nourishment, general health and the weather. T F

KEY: 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. T 7. T 8. T 9. F 10. T