Enthesitis-related Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (ERA)

Enthesitis-related Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (ERA) is a condition that causes joints and entheses to become swollen and painful. Joints are where your bones meet. Bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons all work together so that you can bend, twist, stretch and move.

Your joints

Let’s look inside and see what’s going on...

Your immune system

For some reason, your immune system - instead of just fighting germs - got confused and started attacking the healthy tissues in your joints, causing them to become red, swollen and sore.

Entheses are tissues that connect your ligaments or tendons to your bones.

Symptoms of enthesitis-related juvenile idiopathic arthritis include:

- pain and inflammation in one or more of your joints, usually hips, knees, ankles and feet
- inflammation of your entheses - called enthesitis - most commonly in the knees, heels and bottom of your feet
- joint stiffness, especially in the morning
- an eye condition that can make your eyes red, painful, watery and sensitive to light
- back pain and stiffness - may develop over time.

Everyone’s different and will have different symptoms.

Sometimes you may experience a ‘flare’. This is when your condition is more painful, you have inflammation and you’re super tired.

Why did I get arthritis?

No one knows what causes some people to get ERA. It may be the result of genetic factors (or things you’ve inherited) and something from your environment (e.g. an infection that hasn’t been identified).

What’s in a name?

Enthesitis-related means your arthritis has to do with the entheses in your joints

Juvenile means your condition affects people under the age of 16

Idiopathic means we don’t know what causes it to occur

Arthritis means inflammation of the joint

From time to time you’ll see other health professionals including:

- physio
- occupational therapist
- eye specialist
- pharmacist
- podiatrist
- psychologist or psychiatrist

It all depends on your symptoms.

You’ll need to see your doctor regularly, as well as paediatric rheumatologist. That’s a doctor who specialises in conditions that affect your muscles, bones and joints.

What can I do?

- follow your treatment plan, this is really important
- manage your pain
- eat well
- exercise and stay active
- know what to do when you have a flare
- talk with your teachers and friends
- know it’s OK to feel sad from time-to-time.

ERA is not contagious

Visit our website www.msk.org.au or call our MSK Help Line 1800 263 265

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Will I always have ERA?

It’s impossible to know whether you’ll always have arthritis. Some people go into remission and their arthritis goes away. Others will continue to have it into adulthood. However, there’s no reason that it should get in the way of you doing all the fun and exciting things you want to do.