

Occupational Therapy and JRA

School Accommodations

- Make sure to get a 504 plan in place if you don't have one already
- Try modified pens/pencils
 - Pencil grips and built up handles
 - Felt-tip or other easy mark writing utensils that don't require too much downward pressure
 - "ergo writer"
 - "pen again"
- As writing load increases, consider use of an "alphasmart" or similar device, or dictation for in-school tests and assignments if needed (usually in times of flare-up)
- Request extra time to complete assignments and/or tests
- Use a rolling backpack and/or request an extra set of textbooks to have at home so child does not have to carry them back and forth
- Talk to school office about excused tardiness and absences
- Stretch breaks during the day
- Be sure to educate teachers and staff about JRA
- Request printed copies of school notes that would otherwise need to be copied from board or teacher lecture
- Look into modified, ergonomic seating to improve comfort and stability (ie cushions, stool under feet, etc.)
- For older students, allow for extra time to transition between classes
- Hand/wrist splints may help improve stability and provide better functional positioning for writing and other fine motor tasks (but be careful not to overuse and promote increased stiffness)

Home Modifications

- Allow plenty of time in the morning for getting ready, do things in short segments then take rest break, perform gentle stretches
- Shower chair/stool
- Adapted eating utensils
- Doorknob assists/extendors
- Velcro closures for clothing (you can do this easily yourself to replace pants buttons, etc.)
- Check assistive technology catalogs and websites for good products to improve function with activities of daily living
- Don't be afraid to check products and advice geared toward senior adults with arthritis, these can often be helpful for children too

Therapies

- Consult your PT or OT for specific home program
- Gentle strengthening and range of motion exercises
- Aquatics can be great for kids with JRA
- Some children find relief with massage and other alternative therapies (consult your physician)

Some Helpful Websites:

- <http://www.arthritis.org/ja-school-success.php#5>
- www.pattersonmedical.com - look under "aids to daily living" (if you find a product you like, you can usually do an internet search and find it cheaper on another site like Amazon, etc.)
- www.ncmedical.com - under "catalogs" find "Functional Solutions" – can request a paper catalog sent to house for free
- www.arthritis.org - under the JRA section find the article "A year round guide to 504 plans"

- http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Juv_Arthritis/