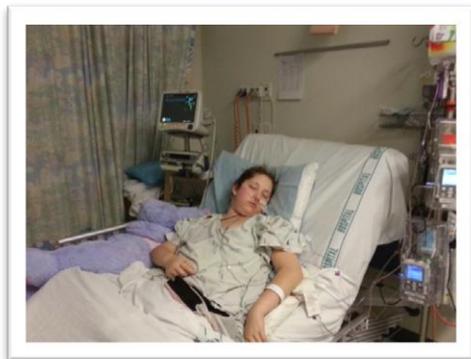


KWANZ's Young Achiever - Mireille

BY Mireille (KWANZ Teenager)



I've struggled with JIA from a very young age. At 18 months old my parents noticed swelling on my foot and by the third visit to the Orthopaedic Surgeon I was no longer walking and getting around on one knee and arm.

After the diagnoses I was put on medication and had a night splint and things seem to settle down a bit. That was until I was about 11 years old. It was then I had my next big flare-up. I can still remember playing my last hockey game and knowing I wouldn't be able to play anymore as I couldn't run, and coming off early in tears.

From that day on things got more serious. I was put on methotrexate injections and Humira injections along with many steroid injections and pain meds.

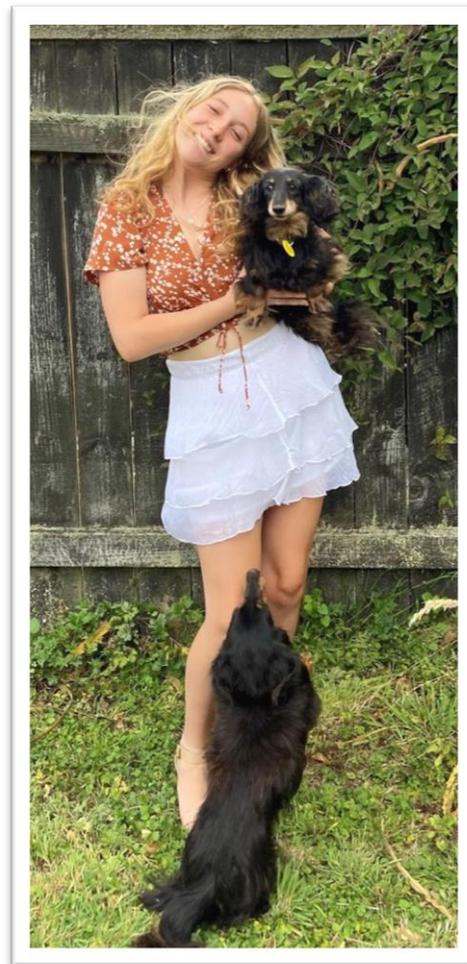
The pain had got so bad I started to do half days at school as I had about 21 joints affected. And then when I hit 12 years old I had a big setback as I got very ill and spent about one month at Starship and two months in Rotorua hospital.

Once released from hospital I was in a wheelchair and moved on to crutches for about a year and a half. After about four years of unbelievable pain and little movement my body seemed to be responding to the methotrexate and Enbrel and I was moving around freely again.

Now sixteen years old, I still struggle with pain here and there, but I'm so much better.

I'm working at a bakery, going to school and going to the gym with my best friend five times a week.

If I could talk to my younger self, and she could see me now, I know she would be proud of how far I've come and how strong I've been. From not being able to do the simple tasks of washing my own hair or standing up from the couch or simply walking too where I am today.



Please remember every journey is unique to that person. Sharing a personal story is an act of kindness; it lets others know they are not alone.

Please check with your child's Specialist or GP if this article has generated medical questions for you.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the view of Kids With Arthritis NZ Charitable Trust.