

KWANZ's Young Achiever - ZARA



When Zara was 2 years old she started limping. We couldn't remember her falling over or injuring herself in anyway but as the days went on the limping seemed to get worse. We took her to our GP who sent us straight to the hospital – after many tests and visits back and forth to the hospital over a 3 month period; she was diagnosed with JIA in her right knee. Zara began to see a Paediatric Rheumatologist in Auckland and shortly after had a Steroid injection in her right knee. Two years later we moved to the Wellington region and somehow we got lost in the system. A year later we were back in the system and we discovered that Zara now had Arthritis in more joints.



More injections were given to elbows and wrists. It was at this time that the Doctor talked to us about Methotrexate. There were a string of side effects that frightened the hell out of us but we decided this would be the best option to try to help Zara. She was doing very well over the next few years and taking Methotrexate was not nearly as bad as we had anticipated.



Little things that were very hard for Zara to begin with started getting easier. Opening doors, turning on taps, walking short distances, brushing her hair and having her arms seize up in the middle of the night and waking to her screaming in pain... were becoming more manageable.

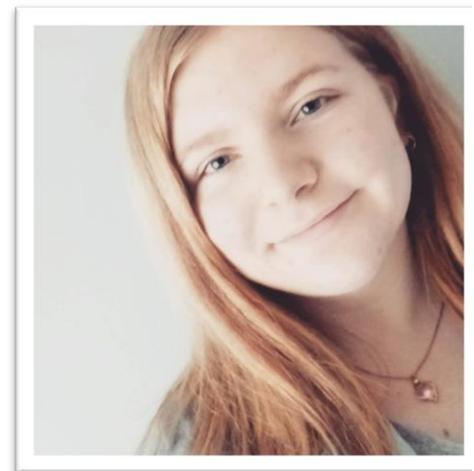
We had some problems at school with kids bullying Zara for being too slow and Teachers that didn't understand. One reliever teacher even told Zara she was a liar in front of the whole class saying "children

don't get arthritis". Zara had attended a few Children's arthritis camps by this stage and so we were able to provide the school with resources that had become available to us through the Doctors, KWANZ, Parents of other children and teenage camp leaders who had been through similar experiences. It was great hearing other people's stories and being able to talk to others about our experiences too.

Zara went into remission a couple of times and was taken off methotrexate, but unfortunately the arthritis came back, each time seemingly worse than the last. Her last time, we discovered it in her jaw and so more Steroid injections were given.

She has had a few MRI's to see what damage has been done to the jaw, there has been considerable damage. There has been talk of surgery once she has reached adulthood and her bones have stopped growing.

We are hopeful that Zara will grow out of this. But we are also hopeful that we're mentally prepared if it stays with her for life.



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.