PRESS RELEASE

**Mia and Max making a difference for children with arthritis**

Juvenile Arthritis Research were amazed when they heard about 9 year old Mia’s plans to raise awareness of juvenile arthritis and much-needed funds for the charity.

Mia has had juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) since she was three years old. JIA is an autoimmune condition – Mia’s immune system, which is designed to fight off viruses, bacteria and infection, is attacking her joints. This causes pain, discomfort, fatigue, and reduced mobility. Mia also has inflammation inside the eye, called uveitis which affects one in 5 children with JIA.

Sometimes juvenile idiopathic arthritis can be an invisible condition and people don’t see the daily struggles that children with arthritis face. As well as coping with the pain that their condition causes, there is a lot more to cope with too from medications (often as painful injections) and regular blood tests as well as a plethora of other tests, scans and x-rays. Then there are the side-effects of the medication which can be very unpleasant. Having a child with JIA in the family can be tough on all family members with so much time spent at appointments and getting to grips with a “new normality”.

Having lived with JIA for 6 years Mia, along with her brother Max, decided to organise some fundraising activities to raise funds for Juvenile Arthritis Research. As well as guess the number of sweets in a jar and other activities, Mia and Max will be joined by their cousins for a sponsored bike ride. So far they have already raised an incredible £500. These vital funds will be used towards searching for a cure for juvenile arthritis, and awareness and support work. You can read more about Mia’s story and support her fundraising at <https://bit.ly/JARMiaMax>

Mia’s mum, Jo, says “It certainly has been a rollercoaster and I imagine the ride is far from over but she is taking it in her stride and makes us so proud every single day.”

Richard Beesley, founder of Juvenile Arthritis Research explains “Awareness that children can get arthritis remains low and this can cause long delays in diagnosis. During that time, joints can become permanently damaged. We know that prompt diagnosis and treatment leads to far better outcomes for children with JIA. Mia and Max are doing an incredible job of telling people about JIA as well as raising funds to allow us to support more families affected by the disease.”

If you have been inspired by Mia’s story and want to make a difference in your community to raise awareness of JIA, please get in touch through our website, [www.jarproject.org](http://www.jarproject.org)

**About juvenile idiopathic arthritis:**

Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (also called JIA) is an autoimmune disease. This means the body’s natural defences (called the immune system) which are designed to fight off viruses, bacteria and infection get confused and start to attack your joints. This causes pain, discomfort, fatigue, and reduced mobility.

Across the UK, around 15,000 children and young people under the age of 16 have been diagnosed with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), and every week around 20 families are given the news that their child has the condition. JIA is a painful autoimmune disorder, where the body’s natural defences attack the joints causing inflammation. This leads to pain, discomfort and reduced mobility. Without adequate and prompt treatment, JIA can lead to other health conditions as well as permanent disability and long-term health implications. Some children with JIA develop uveitis, which is inflammation inside their eye. If this isn’t treated promptly, children could lose their sight.

At the moment there is no cure for Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis. All existing treatments reduce the symptoms of JIA, but are not a cure. Whilst these treatments have beneficial effects in reducing pain and inflammation, and provide some protection against long-term joint damage, they come with their own side-effects and can affect the long-term health of children taking these medications.

You can find out more about JIA in our booklet, My JIA, available as a free download from [www.jarproject.org/myjia](http://www.jarproject.org/myjia)

**About Juvenile Arthritis Research:**

Juvenile Arthritis Research have three aims – to find a cure for JIA, to raise awareness that children and young people get arthritis, and to provide support to children and their families when they receive a diagnosis of JIA.

You can find out more, and support Juvenile Arthritis Research at [www.jarproject.org](http://www.jarproject.org)

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