Pediatric rheumatic illnesses are chronic inflammatory conditions of the musculoskeletal system, affecting approximately one in 1000 children. They include illnesses such as juvenile idiopathic arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, juvenile dermatomyositis, scleroderma, vasculitis, Behçet’s disease and auto inflammatory disorders such as familial Mediterranean fever, and many others.

Some rheumatic disorders are systemic and may affect internal organs such as the kidneys, heart, brain, gut, and eyes, harming children’s overall health and wellbeing.

Others, which are more localised, affect the joints or skin and the growing skeleton, impairing physical development and causing pain and restricted joint movement. Damage to joints, muscles, and tendons is cumulative, therefore the need for early diagnosis is urgent. Early detection and prompt treatment usually provide a better prognosis, keeping damage caused by the illness at bay.

When it comes to pediatric diseases, children are not just small adults. They require different treatments, their illness often runs a different course and has different complications. Pediatric rheumatologists are trained to manage and care for these children and their families.

In order to increase awareness and thereby to reduce the delay in diagnosis and treatment caused by the rarity of these illnesses, the European Society for Pediatric Rheumatologists (PReS) and the European Network for Children with Arthritis (ENCA) are jointly inaugurating WOrld Young Rheumatic Disease Day (WORD DAY) on March 18th 2019.

The information in this flyer is part of the WORD DAY campaign.

When to refer to a pediatric rheumatologist?

Alert signs for possibility of rheumatic illness:

- Joint swelling lasting for more than 2 weeks.
- Morning stiffness/difficult mobility after rest, lasting more than 15 minutes.
- Persistent musculoskeletal pain affecting many parts of the body.
- Persistent limp unrelated to trauma (or after minor trauma).
- A variety of unexplained multisystem symptoms with increased inflammatory markers.
- Unexplained recurrent fever, with and without other symptoms.