

Kawasaki Disease Fact Sheet

Kawasaki disease is a serious disease of children

No one knows what causes Kawasaki disease, but it is thought to start from an infection or from exposure to some toxin. There is no firm evidence that the disease can spread from one person to another.

Kawasaki disease affects mostly children

This disease primarily affects children under the age of 5. Most cases occur in 1 to 2 year old children. Asian children are more prone to get Kawasaki disease than non-Asian children. The disease is seen more often in the winter and spring seasons.

Symptoms to look for may include:

- High, spiking fevers
- Mood changes and irritability
- Red eyes, without pus-like discharge
- A red mouth and throat, and dry, cracked lips
- A red "strawberry" tongue
- A swollen lymph node ("gland") in the neck area
- A red rash
- Swollen hands and feet, and red palms and soles
- Peeling skin of the fingers, palms, and sometimes soles

Diagnosis can be difficult

There is no one test that can confirm this disease. A doctor makes the diagnosis from the symptoms and a few characteristic laboratory findings, such as high platelet counts (cells that help blood clot) in the blood.

Kawasaki disease can be treated. See your doctor immediately if you think your child may have this disease

Kawasaki disease is treated in the hospital with medications that reduce inflammation. The treatment works best when it is started early, within 10 days of when the symptoms began.

Although most children recover completely, Kawasaki disease can cause complications

Twenty to 25% of children with this disease may develop swellings of the arteries in the heart if they are not treated. Early treatment can reduce the risk of heart complications. Other complications include arthritis, meningitis, and rarely death.