

Let's Talk ABOUT...

Kawasaki (“cow-uh-SOCK-ee”) disease is an illness found mostly in children younger than five years old, but sometimes in older children, adolescents, and young adults. Children with Kawasaki disease can have a fever, skin rashes, bloodshot eyes, swollen lymph nodes, heart problems, and joint problems. The illness lasts from two weeks to a few months. No one knows what causes Kawasaki disease, but it is the most common cause of acquired (the child was not born with it) heart disease in the United States.

Children with Kawasaki disease have a fever (sometimes as high as 104° F) for five days or longer that is not explained by another problem (such as infection). Children with Kawasaki disease are very tired and irritable. They may vomit, have diarrhea, and have stomach pain. They will also have at least four of these five problems:

- A red patchy rash that may cover the whole body
- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck
- Swollen hands and feet; redness of the palms of the hands and soles of the feet and later, skin that peels on the fingers and toes
- Red cracked lips, a very red tongue, and redness in the mouth and back of the throat
- Red, bloodshot eyes

Some children, especially infants, may not have these symptoms but the doctor still decides they have Kawasaki disease.

Can Kawasaki disease be prevented?

We do not know how to prevent Kawasaki disease.

How do they know my child has Kawasaki disease?

Your child’s health provider will examine your child and ask questions about her symptoms. They will

Kawasaki disease

order blood and urine tests and a cardiac ultrasound (ultrasound test for the heart).

How is Kawasaki disease treated?

Your child will be admitted to the hospital. Her doctor will order a high dose of aspirin to decrease her fever. Aspirin also helps with rashes and joint pain. Even after the fever goes away, your child will have to take a small dose of aspirin for several weeks to decrease the chance of heart problems. Your healthcare provider may order intravenous gamma globulin (IVIG). IVIG can help prevent the heart problems that can happen with Kawasaki disease. Your child will receive this medicine through a small tube in a vein (IV) for several hours. This treatment has to be in the hospital. Some children may need steroid medicine if they do not get better with IVIG and aspirin.

What happens in the hospital?

In the hospital, your child will have an IV. She will also have blood and urine tests and an echocardiogram (ECHO) test. The ECHO shows pictures of the heart and blood vessels in the heart (coronary arteries or CORE-oh-nair-ree ARE-ter-ease).

Are there complications from Kawasaki disease?

Kawasaki disease causes inflammation of the arteries. This can cause serious problems later. The coronary arteries bring blood to the heart muscle. They can become enlarged, forming “coronary artery **aneurysms** (“AN-your-is-ems”). This means the disease makes the artery weak and part of the artery bulges or “balloons out”. Sometimes this is mild and does not cause any problems. This could also be a severe problem and cause “giant aneurysms”. With “giant aneurysms” there could be blood clots inside the coronary arteries. If the

enlarged coronaries become blocked from blood clots then the heart muscle does not get enough oxygen. This can be a serious problem.

When can I take my child home?

Your child may go home after the fever is gone and she has received any ordered IVIG.

What do I need to do for my child at home

- You will need to take your child's temperature several times a day after she goes home.
- You may have to give your child aspirin at home. Your child's doctor will tell you the amount of aspirin to give her. Keep giving your child aspirin. Her doctor will tell you when to stop.
- You will keep your child home from school or day care until she is well and feels strong enough to return.
- You need to make an appointment for your child with a cardiologist (heart doctor) a few weeks after she goes home from the hospital. It is very important that your child sees the cardiologist. This doctor will check her heart to see if it is healthy again.

Will my child have any symptoms at home?

- Your child's joint pain may move to the larger joints (ankles, knees) before it goes away.
- It usually takes four to six weeks to recover from Kawasaki disease.

Who else can I contact for more information?

For more information about Kawasaki disease and parent support groups, you can contact the **Kawasaki Disease Foundation:**
<http://www.kdfoundation.org/>