



# What Is Kawasaki Disease?

Kawasaki disease is a children's illness. It's also known as Kawasaki syndrome or mucocutaneous lymph node syndrome. About 80 percent of people with it are under age 5. Children over age 8 rarely get it. Boys develop the illness almost twice as often as girls. In the United States, it's more frequent among Asian-American children, but it occurs in children of all races and ethnicities.



## What are the common symptoms of Kawasaki disease?

- Fever (ranging from 101 to above 104)
- Rash on back, chest, and abdomen
- Swollen, red hands and feet
- Bloodshot eyes
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck
- Irritation and swelling of the mouth, lips and throat
- Swelling and joint pain in knees, hips and ankles

## What causes it?

Doctors don't know what causes it. It doesn't appear to be hereditary or contagious. It's very rare for more than one child in a family to develop it.

## How does Kawasaki disease affect the heart?

Damage sometimes occurs to the blood vessels, including those that supply the heart muscle (coronary arteries) and to the heart muscle itself. Part of a coronary wall can be weakened and balloon in an aneurysm. A blood clot can form in this weakened area and block the artery. If the clots are not prevented, this can lead to a heart attack.

Other changes include inflammation of the heart muscle or the sac that surrounds the heart. Abnormal heart rhythms and heart valve problems can also occur. The heart problems usually go away in five or six weeks. There's usually no lasting damage. But sometimes coronary artery damage persists.

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### How is it diagnosed?

Kawasaki disease cannot be diagnosed by a single test or group of tests. Doctors make the diagnosis after carefully examining the child, observing signs and symptoms and eliminating the possibility of other, similar diseases.

### How is Kawasaki disease treated?

Many children with Kawasaki disease are treated in the hospital. The stay is may be a few days or up to a few weeks. Some may be able to receive care at home.

Doctors often use aspirin to reduce fever, rash, joint swelling and pain. This also helps prevent blood clots from forming.

When given early in the illness, intravenous gamma globulin can reduce the risk of developing coronary artery abnormalities. In children with severe Kawasaki disease, adding prednisolone to this treatment appears to result in a substantial risk reduction.



Aspirin is commonly prescribed to treat fever, rash, joint swelling and pain.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

### Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**What can I do to help my child deal with Kawasaki disease?**

### My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.