

KAWASAKI DISEASE

WHAT IS KAWASAKI DISEASE?

Kawasaki disease causes inflammation in the walls of medium-sized arteries throughout the body. It primarily affects children. The disorder affects the mucus membranes, lymph nodes, walls of the blood vessels, and the heart. The most important aspect of the disease is the heart's involvement. The disease can cause inflammation of blood vessels in the coronary arteries, which can lead to aneurysms. Kawasaki disease is the leading cause of acquired heart disease in children.

SYMPTOMS

Kawasaki disease symptoms usually appear in three phases.

1. Kawasaki disease often begins with a high and persistent fever greater than 102°F, often as high as 104°F. A persistent fever lasting at least five days is considered a hallmark sign. The fever may persist steadily for up to two weeks and is not very responsive to normal doses of acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
2. In the second phase of the disease, your child may develop:
 - Peeling of the skin on the hands and feet, especially the tips of the fingers and toes, often in large sheets
 - Joint pain
 - Diarrhea
 - Vomiting
 - Abdominal pain
3. In the third phase of the disease, signs and symptoms slowly go away unless complications develop. It may be as long as eight weeks before energy levels seem normal again.

TREATMENT

The goals of initial treatment are to lower fever and inflammation and prevent heart damage. To accomplish those goals, your child's doctor may recommend:

- Gammaglobulins (IVIG). Infusion of an immune protein (gammaglobulin) through a vein (intravenously) can lower the risk of coronary artery problems.
- Aspirin. High doses of aspirin may help treat inflammation