

Kawasaki Syndrome Fact Sheet

1. **What is Kawasaki syndrome (KS)?** - KS is an acute illness of unknown cause that is characterized by an inflammation of the blood vessels throughout the body. It is likely caused by an infectious agent. KS primarily affects children younger than five years of age. KS was first described in 1967 in Japan by Dr. Tomisaku Kawasaki.

2. **What does KS look like?** - KS is characterized by:

- a. Fever that lasts five or more days,
- b. Rash, often worse in the groin area,
- c. Swelling of the hands and feet, redness of the palms of the hands and soles of the feet,
- d. Irritation and redness of the whites of the eyes,
- e. Swollen lymph glands in the neck,
- f. Irritation and inflammation of the mouth, lips, and throat

3. **Are there serious complications?** - Serious complications of KS include damage to the coronary artery: e.g., dilation or bubbles in artery wall (aneurysms). KS is a leading cause of acquired heart disease in the United States. Treatment with intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) and aspirin substantially decreases the development of these coronary artery abnormalities.

4. **Where and when does KS occur?** - KS occurs worldwide, with the highest incidence in Japan, and it most often affects boys and younger children. KS may have a winter-spring seasonality, and community-wide outbreaks have been occasionally reported. In the continental United States, population-based and hospitalization studies have estimated an incidence of KS ranging from 9 to 19 per 100,000 children younger than five years of age. Approximately 4,248 hospitalizations with KS, of which 3277 (77%) were for children under five years of age, were estimated among children younger than 18 years of age in the United States in the year 2000. In 2006, the number of hospitalizations with KS was 5,523 and the percentage of children under 5 years of age remained the same.

5. How is KS transmitted? – Although KS is likely caused by an infectious agent, there is no evidence to indicate that it is transmitted person-to-person or by a common source.

6. Are there any laboratory tests for Kawasaki Syndrome? Your doctor may conduct a physical examination and use other tests to aid in the diagnosis. There is no specific laboratory test available to diagnose Kawasaki disease. Diagnosis is largely a process of ruling out diseases that cause similar signs and symptoms.

7. For more information about Kawasaki Syndrome:

<http://www.cdc.gov/kawasaki/index.html>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information.

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