

# Coping with Kawasaki disease

Putting you  
in control  
of your life

Patient information

# What is Kawasaki disease?

Your doctor will have told you that your child has Kawasaki disease, an illness characterized by inflammation of the blood vessels.



Kawasaki disease mostly affects children, with 80% of cases being under 5 years of age. In the UK, this condition affects between 150 and 200 people per year.

Boys are more likely to have this illness than girls.

Although the cause is not yet fully understood, Kawasaki disease is thought to result from an infection and may also be hereditary.

# Signs and Symptoms

The first sign of Kawasaki disease is an irritable fever which lasts about 5 days. Your child's temperature can fluctuate from 38.5°C to over 40°C and is often accompanied by swollen glands.

These symptoms are often followed by:

- Inflammation of the mouth and lips
- Reddening of the tongue with raised bumps (Strawberry Tongue)
- Rashes on the body, hands and feet
- Swelling of the hands and feet
- Reddening of the eyes
- Extreme discomfort

Once the fever subsides, the reddening of the eyes and the swollen glands disappear.

During the 3rd week of the illness, the skin around the hands and feet peels, often in large pieces. Also, the knees, hips and ankles may become more painful and inflamed.

But don't worry, full recovery occurs in almost all cases.



# Diagnosis & Treatment

## Diagnosis

To help diagnosis, your child will need to undergo a few tests at hospital. These tests include taking a blood sample to look for:

- Mild anaemia
- Increased white blood cell count
- Increased blood platelet count
- Increased red blood cell sedimentation (indicating possible blood vessel inflammation)

Your child may also be asked to have an ECG (electrocardiogram) test to detect irregular heart rhythms and heart strain, and an echocardiograph test to look at the way the heart and large blood vessels are working.



## Treatment

As soon as Kawasaki disease is suspected or diagnosed, your child will begin a course of treatment including:

- A high intravenous dose of immunoglobulin (a purified human blood plasma product) given in a drip. This will reduce the inflammation and, if started within 10 days of the onset of the illness, will prevent coronary artery damage.
- Aspirin given every 6 hours for a total of 2-3 weeks.
- Prompt treatment can result in the main symptoms improving within 24 hours.

About 25% of children with Kawasaki disease develop heart problems during the later stages of the illness. Weakening of the large vessels supplying the heart may result in ballooning of the blood vessel wall (aneurysm). However, most children make a full recovery.

After 2-3 weeks, your child will again be tested (blood test, ECG, echocardiograph). If the signs of inflammation have gone and there is no suspected damage to the blood vessels around the heart, the aspirin dosage is reduced to a low once daily dose, and stopped completely after 6-8 weeks, once coronary aneurysm has been ruled out.



## At Home

Once released from hospital, you may notice that your child is tired and does not eat well for a week or two. This is quite normal and will pass in time. However, if your child displays any of the following symptoms, contact your doctor immediately:

- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Stomach pains
- Vomiting (with or without blood)
- Return of fever or other symptoms of Kawasaki disease

The above are particularly important while the child is on high dose aspirin.

Some doctors recommend your child has both flu and chicken pox vaccines so as to avoid any risk of viral complications occurring during high dose aspirin treatment (Reyes Syndrome).

## If in doubt... ..ask!

Remember – the majority of cases of Kawasaki disease recover quickly.

If you have any questions or worries about Kawasaki disease, always ask your consultant, who will be able to set your mind at ease.

**Your consultant is:**

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**Contact phone number:**

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## Don't worry, you're not alone!

Founded in 1995, the Kawasaki Disease Support Group is there to help you. Set up by parents of children with Kawasaki disease, the Kawasaki Disease Support Group provides parent and child support, friendly advice and a telephone contact network of other parents and sufferers. In addition, the Support Group provides a range of useful booklets and factsheets.

**If you or a member of your family has Kawasaki disease and you would like to know more about the Kawasaki Disease Support Group, please write to:**

Mrs. S. Davidson

KAWASAKI SUPPORT GROUP

13, Norwood Grove

Potters Green

Coventry CV2 2FR

Tel/Fax: 02476612178

E-mail: [kssg1sue@hotmail.com](mailto:kssg1sue@hotmail.com)

## Patient information

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