DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Public Health

Frequently Asked Questions

KAWASAKI DISEASE (KD)

What is Kawasaki syndrome?
Kawasaki disease (KD), also known as Kawasaki syndrome, is an acute febrile illness that primarily affects children younger than 5 years of age. It is characterized by inflammation of blood vessels. The disease was first described in Japan by Tomisaku Kawasaki in 1967. The first cases outside of Japan were reported in Hawaii in 1976.

Who gets Kawasaki syndrome?
About 80% of KD patients are under 5 years of age. Older children and teenagers can also get KD, but this is uncommon. KD is more common in boys than girls. The majority of cases are diagnosed in the winter and early spring.

How is Kawasaki syndrome spread?
Evidence shows that KD is not contagious and a cause in unknown. An infectious cause, like a virus or bacteria is suspected; however, genetics may be associated with the disease.

What are the symptoms of Kawasaki syndrome?
Clinical signs include fever, rash, swelling of the hands and feet, irritation and redness of the whites of the eyes, swollen lymph glands in the neck, and irritation and inflammation of the mouth, lips, and throat. KD is a leading cause of acquired heart disease in the United States. Serious complications include coronary artery dilatations and aneurysms.

Should an infected person be excluded from work or school?
Since KD is not contagious, exclusions are not necessary.

What is the treatment for Kawasaki syndrome?
Treatment for KD may include:

- Gamma globulin to lower the risk of coronary artery problems
- Aspirin to treat inflammation, decrease pain and joint inflammation, and reduce fever.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of Kawasaki syndrome?
There are no prevention methods for KD.

Resources

Kawasaki Disease Foundation, https://kdfoundation.org/kd101/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/kawasaki/index.html