

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**WHAT IS KAWASAKI DISEASE?**

**Ipswich, MA, January 6, 2009** - Kawasaki disease (KD), also known as Kawasaki syndrome, is a serious illness characterized by inflammation of blood vessels throughout the body that primarily affects young children and infants. Kawasaki disease is the leading cause of acquired heart disease in children. Although about 80 percent of patients are under five years of age, older children and teenagers can also get KD, but this is uncommon. The disease is named after Tomisaku Kawasaki, a Japanese pediatrician who first described the illness in the medical literature in 1967. Although it is more prevalent among children of Asian and Pacific Island descent, KD affects people of all racial and ethnic groups. It is estimated that more than 4,200 children are diagnosed with Kawasaki Disease in the U.S. each year. The cause of KD is unknown, although an agent, like a virus, is suspected. There is no currently accepted scientific evidence that KD is caused by carpet cleaning or chemical exposure.

Kawasaki Disease is characterized by an inflammation of the blood vessels throughout the body. There is no specific test for KD; doctors make a clinical diagnosis based on a collection of symptoms and physical findings. Early symptoms of KD include:

- Fever that lasts for five or more days
- Rash, often worse in the groin area
- Red bloodshot eyes, without drainage or crusting
- Bright red, swollen, cracked lips, "strawberry" tongue, which appears with shiny bright red spots after the top coating sloughs off
- Swollen hands and feet and redness of the palms and soles of the feet
- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck

Without treatment, about 25% of children develop heart disease involving the coronary arteries. Timely diagnosis and treatment (which usually includes intravenous gamma globulin) is highly effective in preventing coronary complications. Doctors continue to study the long-term outcome of children who do not appear to have coronary involvement. Other kinds of longer-term consequences (e.g., non-coronary) are extremely rare. There is no evidence that links KD with autism or a seizure disorder. A very small number of KD children might have a seizure in the early acute stage of KD when there are very high fevers, but there is no on-going or long term seizure prone condition.

For accurate information concerning Kawasaki Disease/Kawasaki Syndrome please visit [www.KDFoundation.org](http://www.KDFoundation.org). If you are seeking support, please call (978) 356-2070 or email [info@kdfoundation.org](mailto:info@kdfoundation.org).

**ABOUT KAWASAKI DISEASE FOUNDATION** - The Kawasaki Disease Foundation is a national nonprofit organization of parents, patients, and medical professionals dedicated to advancing Kawasaki Disease issues. The Foundation focuses on awareness, support, and research in the area of Kawasaki Disease. The Foundation promotes early detection and treatment of Kawasaki Disease, and provides information and support for families through a nationwide telephone and e-mail help network.

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