

Kawasaki disease is an acute multisystem inflammatory disease of blood vessels (vasculitis) that most commonly affects infants and young children. The disease may be characterized by a high fever, inflammation of the mucous membranes of the mouth and throat, a reddish skin rash, and swelling of lymph nodes (lymphadenopathy). In addition, individuals with Kawasaki disease may develop inflammation of arteries that transport blood to heart muscle (coronary arteritis), associated widening or bulging (aneurysms) of the walls of affected coronary arteries, inflammation of heart muscle (myocarditis), and/or other symptoms and findings. Kawasaki disease is the primary cause of acquired heart disease in children in the United States. Although the cause of the disease is unknown, it is widely thought to be due to infection or an abnormal immune response to infection. Kawasaki disease most frequently affects children five years of age or younger. In extremely rare cases, Kawasaki disease may occur during adolescence or adulthood. First reported in Japanese children in the 1960s, the disease is now recognized worldwide and occurs in individuals in all racial and ethnic groups. However, Kawasaki disease appears to affect Asian children most frequently. Estimates indicate that at least 3,000 cases of Kawasaki disease are diagnosed each year in the United States. Males appear to be affected more frequently than females by a ratio of approximately 1.5 to 1.