



Roseola

What is roseola?

Roseola is a common infectious (viral) disease of young children, in which several days of very high fever are followed by a rash. Most children are exposed to the virus but only 33 percent actually develop illness. The most common age for a child to contract roseola is between 6 months and 2 years. Roseola infection strikes boys and girls and the infection may occur at any time of year.

What are the causes and symptoms of roseola?

The most common cause of roseola is a virus called Human Herpes virus 6, or HHV-6. HHV-6 is believed to be passed between people by respiratory secretions, for example, coughing and sneezing. A few other viruses (called enteroviruses) can produce a similar fever followed by a rash illness, which is usually also called roseola. It takes about five to fifteen days to develop illness after being infected.

Roseola strikes suddenly, when a previous well child spikes a very high fever. Some children may have “febrile seizures” with sudden fever spikes. Although some children have a slightly reddened throat, irritability or a slight runny nose, most children have no symptoms other than the sudden development of a high fever. This fever may last for three to five days. Somewhere around the fifth day, a rash begins on the body. The rash is usually composed of flat pink or discolored patches or spots, although there may be some raised patches as well. The rash usually starts on the chest, back and abdomen and then spreads out to the arms and neck. It may not reach the legs and face. The rash lasts for about three days, then fades. The child may have “sleepy” or “droopy” eyelids. Very rarely, roseola will cause more serious disease.

How is roseola diagnosed?

The diagnosis of roseola is often made by carefully examining the feverish child. Once it is determined that pneumonia, ear infection, strep throat or other common childhood illness are not present, the health care provider usually feels comfortable waiting to see if the characteristic rash of roseola begins.

How is roseola treated?

There are no treatments available. Most children recover quickly and completely from roseola. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen may be given to lower the fever. Aspirin should **not** be given to children under age 20 without a health care provider’s approval, due to the increased risk of developing Reye’s Syndrome. Children may return to childcare after fever is gone for 24 hours. Children recover quickly and completely from roseola.

How is roseola prevented?

Other than the usual good hygiene practices, no methods are available to prevent roseola.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 641-7777 or visit our website at www.guilfordhealth.org