

Roseola (Exanthem Subitum, Sixth Disease)

This is an illness caused by infection with a virus called human herpes virus-6 (HHV-6). Almost all children have been infected with HHV-6 by the age of two years.

Symptoms include the sudden onset of a high fever that lasts three to five days and then falls, at which time a rash appears. The rash looks similar to the measles rash, but appears first on the body rather than the face. Roseola is usually a mild illness, although it can lead to convulsions (caused by the high fever).

Diagnosis is made by clinical examination.

Roseola is spread by airborne droplets from the nose and throat and indirectly by contact with hands, tissues and other articles soiled by nose and throat discharges. The disease is also spread by direct contact with the saliva of an infected person.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

About 10 days.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

Saliva, nasal and throat secretions are most infectious from a few days before until several days after the rash appears.

Treatment

No specific antiviral therapy is required. Fever may be treated with paracetamol.



Aspirin should not be given to children under 12 years of age unless specifically recommended by a doctor.

Control of spread

- > Exclusion from child care, preschool, school or work is not necessary.
- > Follow good hand washing procedures.
- > Dispose of soiled tissues appropriately.
- > There is no vaccine available to prevent this infection.

- > Hand Hygiene