



Roseola

Roseola is a common rash illness that usually occurs in children under 4 years of age. It is the most common cause of rash in children 6 months to 2 years of age. Nearly all children have had roseola infection within the first 2 years of life.

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

Human herpesvirus 6 (HHV-6). Cases of roseola due to human herpesvirus 7 (HHV-7) can also occur.

Symptoms

Usually, a high fever that appears suddenly and generally lasts 3 to 7 days. The child may not seem very ill when fever is present. As the fever breaks, usually on the fourth day, a rash appears on the trunk and neck and may later spread to the rest of the body. The rash may last from several hours to several days. Infection also occurs without symptoms in many children. Fever may cause seizures, which are the most common complication and reason for hospitalization among children.

Persons with weakened immune systems may have more severe disease and symptoms may last longer.

Spread

Roseola is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes tiny droplets into the air and another person breathes them in. Also spread by touching contaminated objects and then touching one's eyes, nose, or mouth.

Incubation

Estimated to be 9 to 10 days.

Contagious period

Unknown, but most likely during the fever and before the rash appears. After infection, the virus is present in the saliva on and off for the rest of a person's life.

Exclusion

Childcare: Until fever is gone and other rash illnesses, especially measles, have been ruled out.

Diagnosis

Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider if their child has fever and rash. Diagnostic testing is available but usually does not influence clinical management.

Treatment

Treatment is supportive. Ensure children drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth, after handling used tissues, and before preparing or eating food.
Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.