



## ROSEOLA

### What is roseola?

Roseola is a common illness caused by a virus. Only infants and young children get roseola, usually when they are between six months and two years of age. Roseola normally appears in the spring and autumn seasons.

### Is roseola serious?

The experts say that about three out of every ten children will catch roseola. When they do, the disease is usually mild. Doctors think that many children get roseola and recover from it without anyone knowing, because they never feel or act sick.

### What are the symptoms?

Roseola is usually easy to diagnose. First, the infant's or child's temperature rises quickly, sometimes to as high as 40°C. Roseola can sometimes cause high temperatures. In those few cases where it rises above 40°C the child may have seizures or convulsions. Although these fits can be scary for parents, they rarely cause any permanent damage. Unlike other infections, there are no other symptoms. Although affected infants and toddlers will often go back and forth between feeling comfortable and acting upset, they will usually eat and drink fairly normally. Within three to five days their temperature should drop back to normal, and within 24 hours after that, the roseola rash will develop. This pink or red rash appears on the neck, chest, and body and consists of small pink dots. Sometimes this rash is so faint you can hardly see it. In other cases, it can be very obvious. In either case, this rash usually lasts about a day. One of the key features of roseola is that the rash appears after the fever has ended. In most other childhood diseases the fever and the rash happen at the same time.

### How does roseola spread?

Roseola does not seem to spread very easily from one person to another. In fact, doctors do not know exactly how the disease is spread, or how long it takes to become sick after a child has been exposed to the disease. They think that children are probably contagious from a few days before the fever until the rash appears.

### What treatment is best?

The best thing for your child is to bring the fever down. Clothing should be kept light. As long as the temperature is high you should give your child acetaminophen, four times a day. Do **not** give acetylsalicylic acid - ASA or aspirin - to children. If the temperature reaches 40°C you can help your child become cooler by sponging him or her with a washcloth soaked in cool (but not cold) water. Fever dries out the body, so encourage your child to drink lots of fluids. Food is less important. If the child is hungry, then eating is fine; if there is no appetite, then meals can safely be missed for the few days that any fever lasts. There is no specific treatment for roseola. All you can do is keep your child comfortable, treat the fever, and wait for the disease to run its course. Any child with roseola should rest in bed until the fever is gone. Antibiotics can not cure the disease. If your doctor does prescribe them, it means that the fever might be caused by a bacterial illness.

### Getting back to normal

Your child can go back to social activities such as daycare and visiting the playground as soon as the fever is gone and the rash has disappeared. If your child is recovering from roseola and is returning to daycare, tell the caregivers about the recent illness.

For additional information, contact your local Public Health office or your family doctor.