



**Waukesha County  
Public Health Division  
Fact Sheet**

**Roseola  
(Exanthem subitum)**

**What is Roseola?**

Roseola is a viral illness caused by two viruses: Herpes type 6 and Herpes type 7. These types of Herpes viruses are different than those that cause cold sores or genital herpes.

**Who gets Roseola?**

Roseola is an illness that usually occurs in children under 4 years of age; it is most common before 2 years of age. Rarely does Roseola affect adults.

**How is Roseola spread?**

Roseola is a contagious viral disease that appears to be spread by contact with household members (i.e. parents or older siblings) who have previously been infected and carry the virus in their salivary glands. The mode of transmission, however, is not clearly defined.

**What are the symptoms of Roseola?**

Typically, the child will have a high fever for 3-5 days (temperatures even as high as 106 degrees F). Despite the high fever, the child does not seem very ill. After the fever goes down, a rash usually develops with many small red spots that appear mostly on the torso but also on the face, arms, and legs. When the spots are touched, they turn white. The rash does not itch or cause pain and it usually goes away within 24 hours.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

Incubation period is estimated to be 5-15 days.

**When and for how long is a person able to spread Roseola?**

It is unclear if spread occurs from acutely ill persons. Following acute infection, the virus may be carried in lymph nodes, kidneys, liver, salivary glands and some white blood cells. Communicability from these latent infections may be lifelong.

**Does past infection with Roseola make a person immune?**

Roseola during childhood may provide some lasting immunity to the illness. Repeat cases of illness are rare.

**Is there a vaccine for Roseola?**

There is no vaccine for Roseola.

**What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of Roseola?**

Any child with a fever or rash illness should be kept home from school or daycare.