ROSEOLA INFANTUM
(Sixth Disease, or Exanthem Subitum)

What is it?

Roseola is caused by a virus (human herpesvirus-6). It usually affects children under 4 years.

How do I know if someone has it?

The illness usually starts with a sudden onset of a high temperature (fever) which can last for 3-5 days followed by a fine rash which starts on the trunk and then spreads to the rest of the body. The rash soon fades and symptoms are generally mild, but sometimes the ears can become inflamed and febrile convulsions can occur due to the high fever. The illness is often not recognised or diagnosed.

Is it infectious?

It is not clear how it is passed on but possibly through saliva. However it is reckoned that 90% of children under 3 years have had the illness.

What is the incubation period?

The illness usually appears 10 days after someone has been in contact with an infected person.

Is there any treatment?

There is no specific treatment for the infection. A child with a fever should be kept cool by a fan or sponging with cool water. Paracetamol can be given in the dose prescribed for the child’s age.

How soon can someone with the illness return to school or nursery?

As soon as they feel well.

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