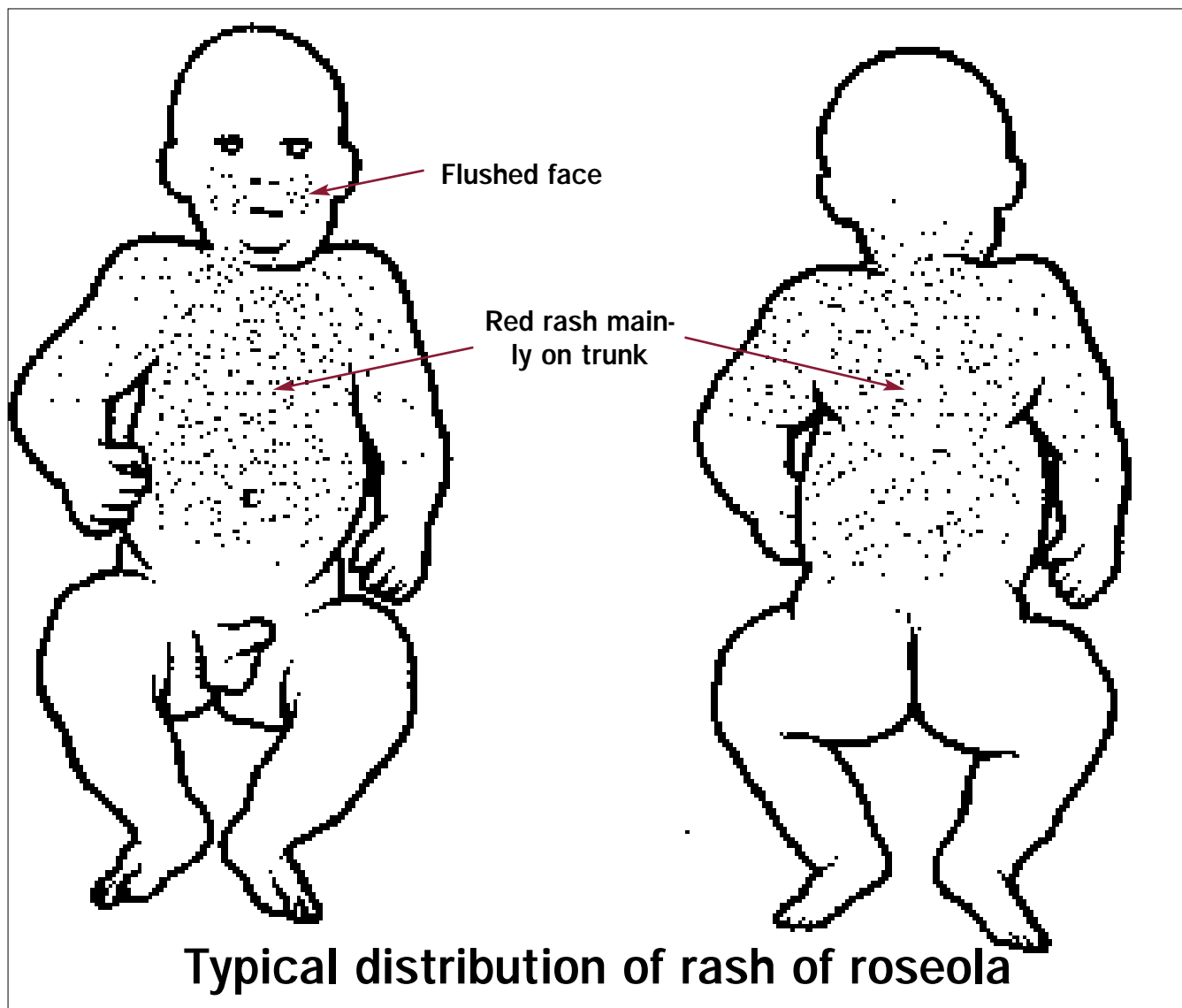


# Roseola infantum



## What is roseola infantum?

Roseola is a relatively common contagious viral infection of young children. It is also called exanthem subitum or sixth disease, or simply roseola.

## What is the cause of roseola?

It is caused by human herpes virus type 6 and is spread from person to person by droplets from the nose or mouth travelling through the air or by direct contact. The incubation period (time from contact to the appearance of symptoms) is 9-10 days and it is most infectious when the rash appears.

The risk to the child increases with exposure to a day care centre or to public places.

## Who gets roseola?

It typically affects children aged six months to two years. It is rare after the age of two. Up to 95% of children have been shown to be infected with the virus by the age of

two, but only about one-third of these children will present with the rash of roseola.

## What are the symptoms and signs?

- Fever, sometimes very high.
- Running nose.
- Irritability.
- Drowsiness.
- Swelling of lymph glands of the neck.

The temperature falls after three days then a red rash appears.

## What is the nature of the rash?

- It is a bright red, spotted rash.
- Mainly confined to the trunk and arms.
- Usually sparse on the face and legs.
- Appears as the fever subsides.
- Disappears within two days.

Note: Sometimes the rash of roseola can be misdiagnosed as a drug reaction to an antibiotic such as penicillin if the patient is given it for the fever and runny nose. Spon-

taneous natural recovery within one week is the rule.

## What are the risks?

The infection usually runs a mild course but febrile convulsions can occur because of the high temperature that can develop in some children. It is believed to cause up to one-third of febrile convulsions in children under two.

Rare complications include inflammation of the brain or its coverings (meningitis) and hepatitis.

## What is the treatment?

There is no special drug to treat roseola so the treatment is supportive and symptomatic:

- Get the child to drink plenty of fluids.
  - Give paracetamol for fever.
  - Rest at home during the fever.
  - Lukewarm baths for high temperatures.
- Antibiotics should be avoided.

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