

CONJUNCTIVITIS ("Pinkeye")



Conjunctivitis, or "pinkeye", is an inflammation of the thin, clear membrane (conjunctiva) that covers the white of the eye and the inside surface of the eyelids. It is

most often caused by a viral or bacterial infection, but can also be caused by allergies.

Anyone can get conjunctivitis. It is very contagious and spreads easily from person-to-person. This is especially true in schools, dormitories or other places where many people congregate or live together.

You can infect yourself with conjunctivitis when you come in contact with the tears or other eye discharge of an infected person and then touch your own eyes. Hands, towels and washcloths can spread conjunctivitis. Hands and objects that look clean can still spread the virus or bacteria that causes pinkeye. Symptoms normally appear a few days after contact with an infected person or a contaminated object.

Individuals with conjunctivitis may be contagious as long as they have any symptoms. These symptoms include:

- Eye redness, irritation and/or swollen eyelids
- Itching, burning or a gritty sensation in the eye
- Tearing and/or discharge that can make the eyelids and eyelashes stick together or dry into a crusty debris, especially in the morning
- Sensitivity to bright light

Like the common cold, there is no cure for viral conjunctivitis since antibiotics can only be prescribed for a bacterial infection.

Antibiotic eyedrops or ointment may be prescribed if you are diagnosed with bacterial conjunctivitis. Use all medication exactly as directed for the full course of treatment. Throw away any extra medication once you are done - do **NOT** save it in case you get pinkeye again.

Cool compresses and artificial tears may provide relief from your symptoms. If the discharge builds up while you sleep (morning "crusty" eyes), do **NOT** try to pull the crust from your eyelashes or eyelids. Place a warm washcloth on your eyes to soften and remove the sticky crust. Use a washcloth only once - immediately put in the laundry after you are done with it.



STOP THE SPREAD OF PINKEYE!

- **DO** wash your hands often with soap and water. Use clean paper towels to dry your hands.
- **DO NOT** touch or rub your eyes.
- **DO** gently wipe discharge from your eyes using disposable tissues and immediately throw them away.
- **DO NOT** wear your contact lenses until eyes are entirely clear of conjunctivitis or while using medicated eye drops or ointment. Check with your eye care provider about whether you can disinfect reusable lenses and their storage case. If you use disposable lenses, throw them away. Start a new set after the infection clears.
- **DO NOT** share eye makeup. Throw away any mascara, eye shadow, concealer, etc that you used just prior to having symptoms. These products are probably contaminated with the virus or bacteria that caused the pinkeye.
- **DO NOT** share washcloths, towels or pillowcases with anyone else.
- **DO** change and wash your pillowcase, washcloth and towel **EVERY** day while you have pinkeye.
- **DO** wipe common surfaces like doornobs, computer mouse and keyboard, or faucet handles with a disinfectant wipe before you touch them.



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