

## Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

### What is it?

Conjunctivitis, or pink eye, is an infection of the clear membrane covering the eyeball. It is usually caused by a virus. It may also be caused by bacteria, allergies, exposure to chemicals, smoke and other irritants, injury, or excessive rubbing of the eye.

### What are the symptoms?

Conjunctivitis begins with a scratchy feeling or pain in the eyes. Itchy eyes are common. It usually begins in one eye, and can spread to the other. The whites of the eyes may appear pink or red. You may also notice a discharge from the eyes, which can make the eyelids stick together in the morning.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of conjunctivitis usually appear within 24-72 hours after being in contact with the discharge of an infected person.

### How is it spread?

The infection is spread easily from person to person by contact with the discharge from the eyes of an infected person. It can be spread on unwashed hands, contaminated clothing, and towels, make up applicators, etc. The person is contagious as long as symptoms persist.

### When can a person return to daycare/school?

- A child with pink eye should be excluded until he/she has been seen by a doctor
- If bacterial, child can return to the childcare program and/or school after 24 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment
- If viral, child can return with doctors approval
- No need to exclude if there is no eye discharge unless there is an outbreak

### Is there treatment?

Your doctor can determine if antibiotic treatment is required for the infection. A warm compress applied to the eyes may help to relieve discomfort, and assist with removing crusts from the eyelids.

### How do I prevent it?

- Do not share towels or wash cloths with an infected person.
- Ensure that you and your child wash your hands after touching or wiping the infected eye.
- Clothes, towels, wash cloths, pillowcases, or anything else used by the person should be washed.

**This information is intended to provide general health-related information about Conjunctivitis. It is not intended to replace medical consultation by your physician and/or other health care professionals.**

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society - Well Beings a Guide to Health in Child Care, Third Edition 2008; Red Book 2006, 26<sup>th</sup> Edition, American Academy of Pediatrics

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