

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINKEYE)

Conjunctivitis is redness and inflammation of the membrane (conjunctiva) that covers the eye and lines the inner surface of the eyelid. Pinkeye is a common infection in young children.

CAUSE Bacteria, viruses, allergies, eye injuries, or chemicals.

SYMPTOMS Includes redness, itching, pain, and discharge, depending on the cause. Bacterial conjunctivitis can sometimes be distinguished from other forms of conjunctivitis by a more purulent (pus) discharge.

SPREAD Touching the secretions from the eyes, nose, or mouth of infected persons.

INCUBATION It takes about 1 to 12 days after exposure for symptoms to begin, usually 1 to 3 days.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Viral and bacterial conjunctivitis are infectious while there is discharge from the eye. Conjunctivitis caused by chemicals or allergies is not infectious.

EXCLUSION Childcare and School:

Purulent Conjunctivitis (redness of eyes and/or eyelids with thick white or yellow eye discharge and eye pain): Exclude until appropriate treatment has been initiated or the discharge from the eyes has stopped unless doctor has diagnosed a noninfectious conjunctivitis.

Infected children without systemic illness (i.e. Adenoviral, Enteroviral, Coxsackie) should be allowed to remain in school once any indicated therapy is implemented, unless their behavior is such that close contact with other students cannot be avoided.

Childcare and School:

Nonpurulent conjunctivitis (redness of eyes with a clear, watery eye discharge but without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness): None, may be considered if child is unable to keep hands away from eyes.

DIAGNOSIS Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has redness of eyes and/or eyelids with pus and/or fever or eye pain.

TREATMENT Antibiotic treatment (eye ointment or drops) is occasionally prescribed for bacterial conjunctivitis. If the infection appears to be viral, most cases require only symptomatic treatment however; severe cases may need treatment with antivirals and other medications.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Use a tissue or your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.
- Encourage children not to rub eyes. Keep the child's eyes wiped free of discharge. Avoid contact with eye drainage.
- Viral conjunctivitis spread may also occur through contact with infected upper respiratory droplets, fomites, and contaminated swimming pools. Isolation precautions may be needed for at least 2 weeks or as long as the eyes are red and weeping.

- **Regular and thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with eye drainage.
- DO NOT share any articles, such as towels and washcloths, eye makeup, contact lens solution, or eye drops.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 35-41)