

You or your child has conjunctivitis (pink eye), an infection of the surface of the eye. It is caused by either a virus or bacteria. People with this problem have red eyes and feel like they are crying. Sometimes it feels like something is stuck in the eye and there can be thick white tears, but this does not always happen. There may be some pain or blurriness too. Doctors usually cannot tell what is the cause is without special tests that take several days. By the time they come back you will probably feel better, so the tests are usually not done. It will usually go away on its own without medicine, but we can still help. Giving eye drops that kill bacteria may make you or your child feel better faster, but are not needed. The drops should not cause problems, so we can give them if you want. They will not work if a virus is causing the infection. Giving medicine for an infection that will go away on its own may prevent it from working on more serious infections in the future. The drops are also expensive. So it is up to you if maybe feeling better faster is worth the cost and risk.

More information may be found here: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/pink-eye/DS00258>

Please ask your doctor or nurse if you have more questions.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.