

Title: Conjunctivitis

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Abstract: Using antibiotics for treatment of bacterial conjunctivitis does not improve symptoms, but it may lead to decreased spread of the infection. Antibiotics should only be used to treat those children who may expose others.

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Conjunctivitis (Pink eye)

What is conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is a redness and swelling of the outer layer of the eye and eye lids; the conjunctiva. This part of the eye is usually white, but becomes red and swollen with infection or irritation.

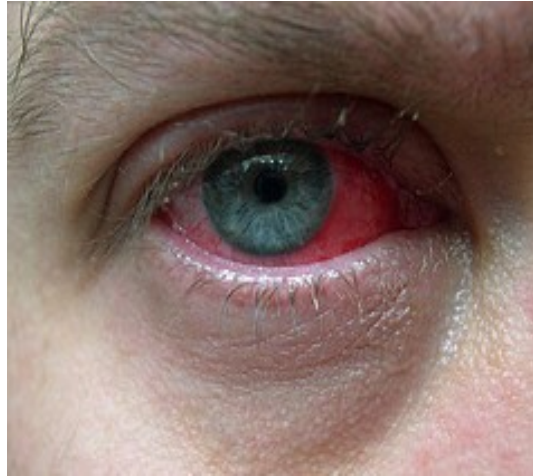
What causes conjunctivitis?

There are two main causes of conjunctivitis: infection and irritation.

1. Infection may be caused by bacteria or by a virus that entered your eye.
2. Irritation may be caused by allergies, chemicals or other small particles that have entered your eye. Irritation can also result from having dry eyes.

What are the symptoms of conjunctivitis?

- Redness of the white part of your eye (conjunctiva)
- Swelling of the eyelids
- Burning, itching, pain, or the feeling that something is in your eye
- Extra tearing or drainage from the eye
- Crusting of the eye upon waking up



How is conjunctivitis treated?

Conjunctivitis treatment is based on the cause.

1. Viral conjunctivitis is the most common infectious cause. It is not treated and goes away on its own within two weeks. Lubricating eye drops may help your symptoms go away faster.
2. Bacterial conjunctivitis also usually goes away without treatment, but may need to be treated with antibiotic eye drops. It is important to see your doctor right away if your eye is very swollen or is draining colored fluids.
3. Conjunctivitis caused by your allergies is treated with lubricating eye drops and an antihistamine/decongestant eye drop.
4. Conjunctivitis caused by chemicals or other small particles is treated by

washing your eye out with water, and using lubricating eye drops.

5. Conjunctivitis caused by dry eyes is treated with lubricating eye drops.

How can I prevent conjunctivitis?

Infectious conjunctivitis is best prevented by not touching your eyes. If you must touch your eyes, always wash your hands first.

Irritating types of conjunctivitis are best prevented by avoiding the causes. Try not to touch your eyes. Always wear eye protection when you are around chemicals, dust, or other particles that may get in your eye. Avoid smoke. If you have dry eyes, use lubricating drops.

When do I need to see my doctor?

You should see your doctor immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- loss of vision, blurry vision
- Severe eye pain, severe swelling
- Thick or colored drainage from eye
- Fever
- Severe headache with nausea

When can I return to work or school?

With the non-infection types of conjunctivitis you can return to work or school right away, as you cannot spread this type to others.

If you have been diagnosed as having an infections type of conjunctivitis, caused by a virus or bacteria, you cannot return to work or school until the symptoms begin go away. This may take 3-5 days. The reason for this is because both viruses and bacteria are easily spread from one person to another. You may also want to find out the rule for infectious conjunctivitis at your work or school, as some require antibiotics be started before your return.

For More Information

Ask your doctor

Visit the following websites:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/medlineplus.html>

<http://www.webmd.com/>