



How well *do* you see?

About Conjunctivitis or “Pink Eye”

What is conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is more commonly referred to as pink eye. The whites of the eyes appear pink or red when the conjunctiva (the transparent membrane which lines part of the eyeball) becomes inflamed or infected.¹ Though pink eye can be irritating, it rarely affects a person’s vision and treatments can help ease the discomfort. Because pink eye can be contagious, early diagnosis and treatment can help limit its spread.¹

There are three types of conjunctivitis:²

- **Bacterial** – caused by bacterial infections and is highly contagious²
- **Viral** – caused by infection of the eye due to a virus, which may be associated with a cold³ and is also highly contagious²
- **Allergic** – caused by the body’s reaction to an allergen or irritant, but is not contagious²

What are symptoms of conjunctivitis and pink eye?

The symptoms of conjunctivitis can include:

- Pink or red color in the white of the eye(s)⁴
- Swelling of the conjunctiva and/or eyelids⁴
- Increased tearing⁴
- Itching, irritation and/or burning⁴
- Feeling like a foreign body is in the eye(s) or an urge to rub the eye(s)⁴
- Crusting of eyelids or lashes, generally in the morning⁴
- Increased tearing, mucous or pus production⁵
- Mild blurred vision⁵
- Cold- or flu-like symptoms, or allergic-like symptoms (itchy nose, sneezing, scratchy throat, asthma)⁴
- Sensitivity to bright light⁴
- Enlargement and/or tenderness of lymph nodes⁴

How is conjunctivitis diagnosed and treated?

An eye care professional (ECP) can diagnose most cases of conjunctivitis with an eye exam.⁶ Treatment for bacterial conjunctivitis can include an antibiotic eye drop or ointment.⁷ For most cases of viral conjunctivitis, there are no treatment options and it will generally need to run its course, which can take up to three weeks.⁷ Allergic conjunctivitis can be treated with the same drops used for allergies.⁷



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Practicing good hygiene can help prevent the spread of infectious conjunctivitis. Things to consider include:⁸

- Washing hands often
- Avoiding eye-hand contact
- Avoiding the reuse of towels, washcloths and tissues to wipe the eyes and face
- Frequently changing pillowcases
- Regularly replacing eye cosmetics and not sharing with others
- Properly cleaning contact lenses

1. Mayo Clinic, Diseases and Conditions: Pink eye (conjunctivitis). <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pink-eye/basics/definition/con-20022732?DSECTION=all> [Accessed July 31, 2014]
2. EyeSmart, Conjunctivitis: What is Pink Eye? <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/pink-eye-conjunctivitis/index.cfm> [Accessed July 31, 2014]
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye), Causes. <http://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/about/causes.html> [Accessed July 31, 2014]
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye), Signs & Symptoms. <http://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/about/symptoms.html> [Accessed July 31, 2014]
5. EyeSmart, Conjunctivitis: Pink Eye Symptoms. <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/pink-eye-conjunctivitis/symptoms.cfm> [Accessed July 31, 2014]
6. EyeSmart, Conjunctivitis: Pink Eye Diagnosis? <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/pink-eye-conjunctivitis/diagnosis.cfm> [Accessed July 31, 2014]
7. Mayo Clinic, Diseases and Conditions: Pink eye (conjunctivitis), Treatments and Drugs. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pink-eye/basics/treatment/con-20022732?DSECTION=all> [Accessed July 31, 2014]
8. EyeSmart, Conjunctivitis: Pink Eye Treatment. <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/pink-eye-conjunctivitis/treatment.cfm> [Accessed July 31, 2014]



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