

CONJUNCTIVITIS (Pink Eye)

Conjunctivitis can be annoying and often uncomfortable, but it can be managed. Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the transparent layer covering the surfaces of the inner eye-lid and the front of the eyeball. This may or may not be associated with the common cold.

PHYSICAL FINDINGS:

1. Redness in the whites of eyes and eyelids.
2. Purulent (pus) or watery discharge
3. Blurred vision
4. Photosensitivity (eyes sensitive to light)
5. Itching and rubbing of eyes
6. Crusts in inner corners of eyes, especially on waking from sleep

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENCES:

1. Allergic: discharge from eyes remains watery without tan, green or yellow color.
2. Viral: less severe than bacterial, often with no colored drainage, runs a 3 – 5 day course and goes away. Treatment may possibly be helpful to reduce discomfort. (Warm compresses 3-4 times a day or prescribed medication).
3. Bacterial (infectious): usually more severe with colored drainage and more crusts. Eye is very red and irritated. Requires medical treatment.

MANAGEMENT:

If you suspect bacterial (infectious) conjunctivitis, seek advice from your child's health care provider and do not send your child to school. When antibiotic drops are prescribed, be sure to follow the recommended dosage and times for administering drops. Your child may return to school 24 hours after starting the medication since the danger of infecting other children has passed. However, drops must be continued for as long as your health care provider recommends. This may mean up to 7 days. Just because the symptoms have mostly disappeared in several days, this does not mean the infection is gone.

PREVENTION:

By encouraging frequent and thorough handwashing in school and at home, the incidence of conjunctivitis will be greatly diminished. Infectious conjunctivitis is contagious. Therefore, students with conjunctivitis should keep their hands away from their eyes and wash thoroughly if they do touch their eyes.