

Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)

What is conjunctivitis?

Inflammation (ie, redness, swelling) of the thin tissue covering the white part of the eye and the inside of the eyelids

What are the signs or symptoms?

There are several kinds of conjunctivitis, including

- Bacterial
 - ~ Red or pink, itchy, painful.
 - ~ More than a tiny amount of green or yellow discharge.
 - ~ Infected eyes may be crusted shut in the morning.
 - ~ May affect one or both eyes.
- Viral
 - ~ Pink, swollen, watering eye(s) sensitive to light.
 - ~ May affect only one eye.
- Allergic
 - ~ Itching, redness, and excessive tearing, usually of both eyes.
- Chemical
 - ~ Red, watery eyes, especially after swimming in chlorinated water.

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

Depending on the type of conjunctivitis, incubation period varies.

- Bacterial
 - ~ The incubation period is unknown because the bacteria that cause it are commonly present in most individuals and do not usually cause infection.
 - ~ The contagious period ends when the course of medication is started.
- Viral
 - ~ Sometimes occurs early in the course of a viral respiratory disease that has other signs or symptoms.
 - ~ One type of viral conjunctivitis, adenovirus, may be contagious up to 14 days after the appearance of signs or symptoms.
 - ~ The contagious period continues while the signs or symptoms are present.
- Allergic
 - ~ Occurs in response to contact with the agent that causes the allergic reaction. The reaction may be immediate or delayed for many hours or days after the contact.
 - ~ No contagious period.

- Chemical
 - ~ Usually appears shortly after contact with the irritating substance.
 - ~ No contagious period.

How is it spread?

Hands become contaminated by direct contact with discharge from the infected eye, or by touching other surfaces that have been contaminated by the secretions from the child's eyes.

How do you control it?

- Consult health professional for diagnosis and treatment. Antibiotics are needed only for signs of bacterial conjunctivitis (ie, redness *and* green or yellow discharge).
- Careful hand washing before and after touching the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Careful sanitation of objects that are commonly touched by hands or faces such as tables, doorknobs, telephones, cots, cuddle blankets, and toys.

What are the roles of the caregiver/teacher and the family?

- Report the infection to staff designated by the child care program or school for decision making and action related to care of ill children. That person, in turn, alerts possibly exposed family members and staff to watch for symptoms.
- Notify child's parent/guardian to consult with the child's health professional about diagnosis and treatment (by telephone or office visit).
- Seek advice from the health department or the program's health consultant about how to prevent further spread if more than 2 children have the infection at the same time.
- Review hand washing techniques and sanitation routines.
- Complete course of medication if indicated for bacterial conjunctivitis.

Exclude from group setting?

- **Yes** for bacterial conjunctivitis (ie, red eyes *and* green or yellow discharge).
- **No** for all other forms, except on recommendation of the health department or the child's health professional for epidemic adenoviral conjunctivitis.

➤ *continued*