

Conjunctivitis

WHAT IS CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Conjunctivitis or "pink eye" is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, or outer lining on the white part of the eyeball. Healthy conjunctiva makes the eye look white. When the conjunctiva is inflamed or irritated, the eyes look pink or red. Often with conjunctivitis, there is discharge, which can be watery, or thick and yellow or green. Other symptoms of conjunctivitis may include burning, itching, irritation, blurry vision or crusting of the eyelashes.

WHAT CAUSES CONJUNCTIVITIS?

There are many causes of conjunctivitis. Infections that cause conjunctivitis are bacteria or viruses. Conjunctivitis can also be caused by allergies or irritation when the eyes are in contact with chemicals. The eye may look similar to you no matter what is causing the conjunctivitis. An eye exam can help figure out what is the cause of the "pink eye", and also make sure that the eye is not red for another reason (see below, "Does a pink eye always mean infection?").

IS CONJUNCTIVITIS CONTAGIOUS?

Conjunctivitis caused by bacteria or viruses is contagious [See Figure 1].

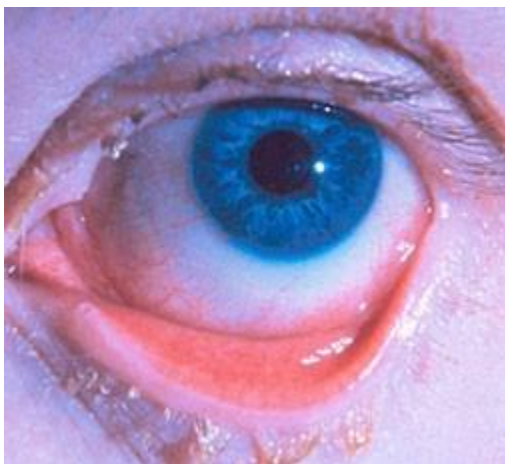


Fig. 1: Bacterial Conjunctivitis.

HOW IS CONJUNCTIVITIS TREATED?



As stated above, there are many possible causes of conjunctivitis, and treatment depends on the cause. If the conjunctivitis is caused by bacteria, antibiotic drops or ointment may be needed. It is important to use any prescription medication for the full number of days prescribed in order to prevent the infection from coming back and reduce antibiotic resistance in bacteria. Viral conjunctivitis, which is often seen with other symptoms like sore throat, runny nose and cough, does not respond to antibiotics and those medications are not needed. [Allergic conjunctivitis](#) can be treated with allergy eye drops, allergy medicines by mouth and artificial tear drops.

ARE THERE ANY PERMANENT EFFECTS ON VISION FROM CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Most forms of conjunctivitis caused by infections clear without causing any eye problems. However, some serious infections and certain types of viral eye infections, such as herpes, can cause vision problems if not treated appropriately.

HOW CAN I PREVENT CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Hand washing is the best way to avoid getting conjunctivitis and avoid spreading it to others. It is also important to not touch your eyes or face unless you have just washed your hands.

Special recommendations for contact lenses: If you wear contact lenses, wash your hands before putting in and taking out your lenses. Regularly cleaning and throwing out your lenses, according to guidelines, can also help keep infections away. Always store your contact lenses in solutions recommended by contact lens guidelines. Never swim in a lake or hot tub with your contact lenses on. If you have been diagnosed with conjunctivitis, do NOT wear your contact lenses until you have healed, and then, start with a fresh pair of lenses.

DOES A PINK EYE ALWAYS MEAN INFECTION?

No. A pink or red eye may be a sign of another eye problem such as allergy, foreign body (something stuck in the eye), contact lens reaction, inflammation inside the eye, or [glaucoma](#) (high eye pressure).

MY BABY HAS TEARING AS WELL AS DISCHARGE. IS THIS CONJUNCTIVITIS?

These could be signs of conjunctivitis but may also be caused by a [blocked tear duct](#), or [glaucoma](#) (high eye pressure).

More technical information about conjunctivitis can be found on:

- <https://eyewiki.org/Conjunctivitis>



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