

Health Alert: Conjunctivitis (Pink-Eye)

Conjunctivitis (pink eye) is an infection or irritation of the eye. It can be caused by a variety of bacteria and viruses, often accompanying a respiratory illness (e.g. cold or ear infection). It can also be caused by chemicals (e.g. smoke, make-up), allergies (e.g. pollen), and other irritants e.g. dust). Conjunctivitis causes redness of the whites of the eyes and crusty eyelashes when the child wakes up. Children might complain of a gritty or itchy feeling in the eyes and sensitivity to light. Conjunctivitis can begin in one eye but usually ends up involving both eyes. The symptoms typically last for 3-5 days.

For the latest information on Conjunctivitis, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/>

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at Schoolhealth@onenessfamily.org.

How is Conjunctivitis spread?

Infectious conjunctivitis (i.e., caused by bacteria or virus) is spread by contact with secretions from the eye, nasal mucus, and saliva. It can spread through droplets coughed or sneezed into the air, and secretions on hands, tissues, linens, and makeup.

Conjunctivitis Symptoms

People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days after getting infected. If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, please keep them home and consult a doctor:

- Pink or red color in the white of the eye(s)
- Swelling of the conjunctiva (the thin layer that lines the white part of the eye and the inside of the eyelid) and/or eyelids
- Increased tear production
- Feeling like a foreign body is in the eye(s) or an urge to rub the eye(s)
- Itching, irritation, and/or burning
- Discharge (pus or mucus)
- Crusting of eyelids or lashes, especially in the morning
- Contact lenses that feel uncomfortable and/or do not stay in place on the eye

How is Conjunctivitis diagnosed and treated?

Children with conjunctivitis should be seen by their healthcare provider. The health care provider might prescribe antibiotic eye drops or ointment to treat infectious conjunctivitis.

A child with infectious conjunctivitis should stay home until 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment and until there is no discharge from the eyes. If no pus is present, the child does not need to be excluded.

How can we limit the spread of Conjunctivitis?

- Encourage children not to rub their eyes.
- Have children wash their hands after touching their eyes and nose.
- Use disposable tissues and paper towels.
- Do not share handkerchiefs, washcloths, hand towels, or bed linen.
- Wash your hands well after touching the child's eye, applying eye medication, and blowing the nose.