

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis) ***Fact Sheet***

Cause	Allergies, chemicals, viruses, or bacteria. It can exist alone or as a complication of a sore throat, tonsillitis, or sinusitis. Children under 5 are most prone to bacterial conjunctivitis.
Symptoms	Red, watery, itching, burning eyes; swollen eyelids; sensitivity to light; eye pain. A thick discharge may cause the eyelids to crust over and stick together during the night.
Spread	Viral and bacterial infections may be spread by contact with the secretions from the eyes, nose, and throat. Infection may be from direct contact with someone who has the infection or something that person has touched, such as a used tissue. Allergic or irritant conjunctivitis is not contagious.
Incubation Period	Commonly 1 – 3 days (bacterial and viral)
Period of Communicability	Until the active infection passes or until 24 hours after treatment has begun.
Diagnosis and Treatment	Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis can look the same. Consult a physician when there is eye drainage to determine whether antibiotic eye ointment or drops are needed. Avoid non-prescription eye drops. If an allergic conjunctivitis is suspected, anti-allergy medication or eye drops may be prescribed.
Prevention/Control	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Keep eyes wiped free of discharge. Wash the eyelids with water to remove extra secretions or crusting, being careful not to get any fluid from one eye into the other.2. Dispose of contaminated tissues properly.3. Practice frequent, careful hand washing.4. In daycare settings, clean and disinfect mouthed toys daily or when soiled*. Try to prevent sharing of toys when conjunctivitis is present.
Exclusion	<p>Bacterial: until 24 hours after treatment begins.</p> <p>Viral: until a letter from a physician is provided to verify that the person does not have bacterial conjunctivitis.</p> <p>Person should also feel well enough to participate in normal daily activities before returning.</p>

*To sanitize mouthed toys or eating utensils: boil, use a dishwasher, or soak clean items for 2 minutes in a weak bleach solution – 3 teaspoons bleach added to 1 gallon water (or a scant teaspoon in a quart). Air dry. Do NOT rinse. This solution can also be used to disinfect clean kitchen surfaces.