



Conjunctivitis (also known as red or pink eye)

Conjunctivitis is a common condition that causes redness and inflammation of the thin layer of tissue which covers the front of the eye (the conjunctiva) and most people are able to manage it with self-care. Conjunctivitis can affect one eye at first, but usually affects both eyes after a few hours. The conjunctiva can become inflamed as a result of:

- a bacterial or viral infection – this is known as infective conjunctivitis
- an allergic reaction to a substance eg pollen or dust mites – this is known as allergic conjunctivitis
- the eye coming into contact with things that can irritate the conjunctiva, eg shampoo or chlorinated water, or a loose eyelash rubbing against the eye – this is known as irritant conjunctivitis

Symptoms of conjunctivitis can include itchiness and watering of the eyes, and sometimes a sticky coating on the eyelashes. If you have infective conjunctivitis, you may also have:

- a burning sensation in your eyes
- a feeling of grit in your eyes
- an enlarged lymph node (gland) in front of the ear

Managing your condition

You do not need to avoid work or school unless you or your child are feeling unwell. Treatment with medications isn't usually needed for conjunctivitis, because the symptoms often clear up within a couple of weeks. If treatment is needed, the type of treatment will depend on the cause:

Infective Conjunctivitis - There are several ways you can manage infective conjunctivitis at home.

- **Wash** your hands regularly – this is particularly important after touching your eyes and will stop the infection spreading to others.
- **Remove your contact lenses** – if you wear contact lenses, take them out until all the symptoms of the infection have gone; don't re-use old lenses after the infection has gone because they could be a potential source of re-infection; always use new lenses, solutions and cases after an infection.
- **Clean** - Gently clean away sticky discharge from your eyelids and lashes using cotton wool soaked in cooled previously boiled water.
- **Use lubricant eye drops** – these are available over the counter at pharmacies; they may help ease any soreness and stickiness in your eyes; always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Speak to your pharmacist** – In severe cases, antibiotic drops can be used to clear the infection.

Allergic Conjunctivitis

- If possible, you should avoid the substance that triggered the allergy.
- Allergic conjunctivitis can usually be treated with anti-allergy medications such as antihistamines and anti-allergy eye drops.

Irritant Conjunctivitis - should clear up as soon as whatever is causing it is removed.

When should I seek advice?

It's very important to go back to your GP if you still have symptoms after two weeks. You should also contact your GP immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- eye pain
- sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- loss of vision
- intense redness in one eye or both eyes

For more information

- Visit your local pharmacy for advice

Find out more about self-care at www.nhs.uk

Be self-care aware