

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) Information Sheet

What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis, or “pink eye”, is an eye condition that causes swelling and inflammation of the conjunctiva (the layer that lines the inside of the eyelid and covers the white part of the eye). It is called “pink eye” because of the distinctive reddish-pink color seen in the white of the eye.

How can you catch Conjunctivitis?

Most commonly, conjunctivitis comes from exposing the eye to viruses, bacteria, and allergens. Chemicals, fungi, certain diseases, and contact lenses can also irritate the eye. Some types of conjunctivitis can spread from person to person through contact with discharge from an infected eye.

What are the symptoms of Conjunctivitis?

Classic symptoms of conjunctivitis include:

- Pink or red color in the white of the eye(s)
- Itchy or scratchy eyes
- Discharge from the eye(s)
- Crusting of eyelids or lashes

How can you be treated for Conjunctivitis?

The treatment depends on the cause of the conjunctivitis. Most infections are mild and clear up within 7-14 days without any treatment. Artificial tears and cold packs can reduce swelling and dryness. Eye-irritation can be relieved by removing the source of irritation and cleaning out the eye. Conjunctivitis that is caused by bacteria may require antibiotic drops.

How can you prevent Conjunctivitis?

- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and warm water.
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.
- Avoid sharing towels, pillowcases, blankets, or washcloths with infected persons.
- Avoid sharing any eye makeup, mascara, or face makeup with infected persons.
- Make sure contact lenses are stored properly and kept clean.