

“Do I need to be seen today?”

Let's Talk About...

Conjunctivitis

(aka “Pink Eye” or “Red Eye”)

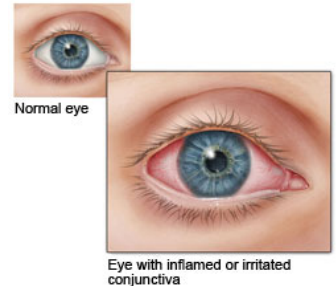
What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis (in other words, “pink eye” or “red eye”) is an infection of the clear layer that covers the white of the eyes and the eyelid (called the conjunctiva). Pink eye is commonly caused by a bacterial or viral infection, allergies or an irritant. While conjunctivitis can be irritating, it rarely affects vision.

What are the signs & symptoms?

Signs and symptoms of conjunctivitis may include any of the following:

- Pink or red colour in the white of the eye(s)
- Swelling of the eyelids
- Increased tear production
- Itchy, irritated, burning or gritty sensation
- Discharge (pus or mucus) – may be watery, or thicker and yellow-green in colour
- Crusting that forms on the eyelids or lashes, especially in the morning
- Symptoms of a cold or flu



Should I be seen in the office?

Most cases of conjunctivitis will get better on their own without treatment and patients don't benefit from an office visit. Please consider the following information before booking an appointment.

What should I do if I have pink eye?

If you wear contact lenses, stop use until the infection has cleared.

The treatment for pink eye depends on the cause.

If you have **viral or bacterial** conjunctivitis, signs and symptoms should gradually clear on their own, usually within 7-14 days. Infection may begin in one eye and spread to the other and may occur with symptoms of a cold, flu or other respiratory infection, or an ear infection. If the infection is viral, you may have watery discharge, whereas a thicker, yellow-green colour discharge is usually associated with bacterial conjunctivitis. Viral and bacterial forms of conjunctivitis are highly contagious. See *How can I protect myself and others* below.

Family Health Team

If you have **allergic** conjunctivitis, the condition can usually be controlled with allergy eye drops. Over-the-counter allergy medication (such as, brand names: Claritin or Reactine) may also alleviate symptoms. Talk to your pharmacist and follow instructions as outlined on the package. Allergic conjunctivitis usually occurs in both eyes and is associated with intense itching, tearing and swelling. Avoid exposure to the allergen.

If you have conjunctivitis resulting from **irritation**, signs and symptoms usually clear up on their own within about a day. A cool compress and over-the-counter drops (artificial tears) may alleviate irritation and reduce discomfort.

How can I protect myself and others?

Viral and bacterial forms of conjunctivitis can easily be passed on to others. Take the following steps to stop the infection from spreading:

- Don't touch your eyes with your hands.
- Wash your hands often.
- Use a clean towel and washcloth daily. Do not share towels or washcloths.
- Change your pillowcases often.
- Throw away old cosmetics. Do not share eye cosmetics or personal eye care items.



When to call the WCFHT



Most people with conjunctivitis recover without medical care. However, there are some serious eye conditions that may cause redness or swelling of the eyes. If you experience any of the following, call us for advice.

- ✓ Newborn baby shows signs of pink eye
- ✓ You have had recent eye surgery
- ✓ Contact lens wearer
- ✓ Redness or swelling of the eyelids
- ✓ Fever above 100.4° F (38° C)
- ✓ Eye pain (note: itching is expected and does not require an office visit)
- ✓ Blurred vision or sensitivity to light
- ✓ Headache, nausea or vomiting
- ✓ Believe a foreign object is stuck in your eye
- ✓ You have a weakened immune system or uncontrolled diabetes
- ✓ Symptoms do not improve within 7-14 days

