



CINCINNATI HEALTH DEPARTMENT
SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM

CONJUNCTIVITIS

Children with conjunctivitis or inflammation of the eye only have to see a doctor for this condition if there is green or yellow drainage or crust.

Home Instructions to prevent the spread of conjunctivitis:

1. Have your child wash their hands frequently.
2. Don't share washcloths, towels, pillowcases, etc.
3. Wash all linens in hot, soapy water, and dry on the high cycle after your child uses them.
4. Encourage your child not to share facial or eye products like make-up or sunglasses.
Throw away any eye make-up used before the infection.
5. Cold compresses may help relieve irritation.
6. If your doctor gives your child eye medication, please use as prescribed. You cannot use old eye medication or medication prescribed for another child.

What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis, sometimes called "pinkeye," is an irritation of the lining inside the eyelids and the covering over the whites of the eyes.

What causes Conjunctivitis?

There are two main causes of conjunctivitis:

- 1) Bacteria or Viruses – In bacterial conjunctivitis, in addition to redness and itching of one or both eyes, there is usually a sticky, yellowish-white discharge. The discharge may cause crusts on the eyelids and may make the eyelids stick together when the child wakes up. In viral conjunctivitis, the eye discharge is usually clear and watery or like mucous. Viruses and bacteria can pass from person to person through contact with infected tears or nasal drainage and can also spread by hands after rubbing or wiping infected eyes.
- 2) Allergic Reaction or Chemical Irritation - Allergic conjunctivitis can be due to something in the air, such as pollen, dust, or smoke; or from touching something you are allergic to, such as a cat. Allergies may cause swelling, itching, and watering of the eyes. Many types of chemicals can irritate the lining of the eyes and cause eye irritation and pain. Spray perfumes, deodorants, household cleaners, incense, smoke, and pollution are some of the causes of chemical conjunctivitis.

How is conjunctivitis treated?

It is sometimes difficult to determine the type of conjunctivitis. Doctors can often determine the type by taking a careful history of when and how the child's eye symptoms began and by examining the child's eyes to look for specific signs, such as swelling or discharge.

If your child has allergic conjunctivitis, your doctor may treat irritated eyes with decongestants or with eye drops containing antihistamines.

Bacterial conjunctivitis is treated with antibiotics, usually given as either eye drops or as an ointment. This medicine cannot be shared or be used with a future infection. With certain types of bacteria, oral antibiotics may be given. If you are caring for a child with bacterial conjunctivitis, it is important to give these medications for as many days as your doctor has prescribed, even if eye symptoms clear several days before the end of the treatment. This will prevent your child's conjunctivitis from coming back. If your child's eyelids are sticky with yellowish discharge, you can use a clean cotton ball soaked in warm water to gently wipe the eyelids. A child with bacterial conjunctivitis is excluded from school until treatment is begun.

Viral conjunctivitis cannot be treated with antibiotics. It usually clears on its own after a few days. Viral conjunctivitis is also contagious but since there is no treatment, children should not be excluded from school.

GOOD HANDWASHING HELPS STOP THE SPREAD.