

# Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) Fact Sheet

## Conjunctivitis is an infection of the eyes, commonly known as pink eye

Pink eye is a very contagious condition that causes redness and irritation in the eyes. Many different viruses and bacteria can cause pink eye.

## Anyone can get pink eye

Pink eye caused by viruses or bacteria easily spreads from person to person. You can get pink eye from close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands, contact with droplets from the air from an infected person's coughs or sneezes, and touching surfaces or objects with germs on them, then touching your eyes before washing your hands.

## Signs and symptoms of pink eye include:

- Pink or red color in the whites of the eye
- Watery, teary eyes
- Discharge (pus or mucus)
- Swelling of the eyelids or a thin layer that lines the whites of the eye
- Itchiness, irritation, and burning of the eye

For pink eye caused by bacteria, symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after exposure. For pink eye caused by viruses, symptoms usually appear 1 to 12 days after exposure.

## Conjunctivitis is usually a mild illness

Both viral and bacterial conjunctivitis will often go away in 7 to 14 days without treatment. If your conjunctivitis is not going away, you have signs of severe infection, or are caring for a newborn with conjunctivitis, you should speak to a healthcare provider right away.

## Talk to your doctor if you have symptoms of a more severe infection, such as:

- Severe eye pain
- Change in vision
- Extreme sensitivity to light
- Marked heat and swelling of the eyelids

## Possible treatment options

Home remedies, such as cold compresses and artificial tears, might help relieve the discomfort caused by pink eye. Antiviral and antibiotic medications may shorten the length of infection, reduce complications, and prevent the spread to others. Ask your healthcare provider about these treatment options.

## How to prevent pink eye

### If you have pink eye:

- Wash your hands with soap and water often, and immediately after touching or wiping your eyes
- Throw away or carefully wash items that touch your eyes
- Don't share makeup or other items used on or around your eyes
- Thoroughly wash or clean personal items like clothing, pillows, and towels after using them
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Don't use swimming pools or hot tubs
- Stay home from work or school when you have a fever; avoid close contact with others until your symptoms have improved

### If you're around someone with pink eye:

- Wash your hands with soap and water often; avoid touching your eyes with unwashed hands
- Don't share makeup or other items used on or around your eyes
- Don't use other personal items, like clothing, pillows, and towels, used by someone with pink eye until they've been thoroughly cleaned