

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINKEYE)

Conjunctivitis (or pinkeye) is a mild inflammation of the eyes most often caused by a virus but occasionally caused by bacteria or allergies. With this inflammation, the white part of the eye becomes pink, and the eyes produce lots of tears and discharge. In the morning, discharge may make the eyelids stick together.

Transmission

Conjunctivitis is most common among children who may spread it to other children or to people taking care of them when pus gets into an uninfected individual's eyes. Individuals may pass the infection by rubbing their eyes, spreading discharge to their hands, and then touching someone or something else. *Conjunctivitis* may also be spread when washing, drying or wiping and individual's face and then using the same washcloth, towel, paper towel or tissue on another's face.

Diagnosis

Conjunctivitis is diagnosed by the typical appearance of the eye(s). However, it is often difficult to tell if the cause is bacterial or viral. Occasionally the doctor will examine the discharge under a microscope or culture it.

Treatment

Often an antibiotic eye medication will be prescribed to shorten the length and severity of symptoms and decrease infectiousness. It is recommended that individuals with *conjunctivitis* be treated by rinsing out the eye and by using a prescribed antibiotic eye medicine to prevent the spread of infection.

School attendance guidelines

Individuals with *conjunctivitis* do not need to leave school in the middle of the day. Inform parents that the symptoms were noticed and permit infected students and staff to return the day after treatment has begun. Parents should notify the school if the healthcare provider decides not to prescribe a medicine.

Notification guidelines

When *conjunctivitis* occurs within the school population, the school nurse and school physician shall determine, based on their medical judgment, whether any, some or all parents and/or staff should be notified. When necessary they may consult with the Department Of Health. Prior to parent notification, it should be discussed with the school administrator.