



Pink Eye- Information for Parents

What is pink eye (conjunctivitis)?

Pink eye, medically termed conjunctivitis, is an inflammation or infection of the eye that has many different causes including viruses, bacteria, allergies, or objects in the eye. The most common causes of pink eye are viral and bacterial infections. Pink eye is an irritating and fairly common condition, but rarely causes long term eye or vision damage. Here are the three most common types:

Viral conjunctivitis- usually affects only **one eye**, which has excessive watering and a light discharge. Crusting on eyelids sometimes occurs. Viral conjunctivitis is contagious, and like other viruses, antibiotics can't treat it. Unless there's a special reason to do so, doctors don't normally prescribe medication for viral conjunctivitis, because usually it clears up on its own in a few days or weeks. Artificial tears eye drops and warm or cold compresses can help alleviate some of the discomfort.

Bacterial conjunctivitis- often spreads to both eyes and causes a heavy discharge, sometimes greenish. Crusting may appear on eyelids. Bacterial conjunctivitis is contagious. Antibiotic eye ointments or drops may help eliminate it.

*** The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that children with purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva (whites of the eye) with white or yellow discharge, often with matted eyelids after sleep and eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eyes) be excluded until examined by a health care provider or 24 hours after starting antibiotic therapy.

Allergic conjunctivitis- is not contagious; it occurs when irritants such as allergens, dust and smoke are in the environment. Allergic conjunctivitis causes itching, redness and excessive tearing in **both eyes**. The nose also may be stuffy, itchy and runny. Artificial tears may dilute irritants in the eye's tear film, and antihistamine allergy pills or eye drops also may help control symptoms. Children may remain at school if conjunctivitis is due to allergies.

How is pink eye spread?

Direct contact with the infected person's eye drainage or drainage from the person's cough, sneeze, or runny nose · Indirect contact with objects that may have the infected person's drainage on them (i.e. eye makeup applicators, towels, shared eye medications) · Contact with the infected person's fingers or hands which may contain the virus or bacteria.

When can my child return to school?

Parents should minimize exposure to other children and staff by keeping their child with pink eye home until the contagious stage has passed. The child's doctor can advise when the contagious stage has passed, usually three to five days after a diagnosis. If the school suspects your child has pink eye and sends him/her home, we ask that the child remains home for at least 24-48 hours until symptoms are noticeably improved OR a written note is received from the child's doctor stating the child is okay to return to school earlier. For bacterial conjunctivitis, a child may return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotic ointment or drops.