

Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)

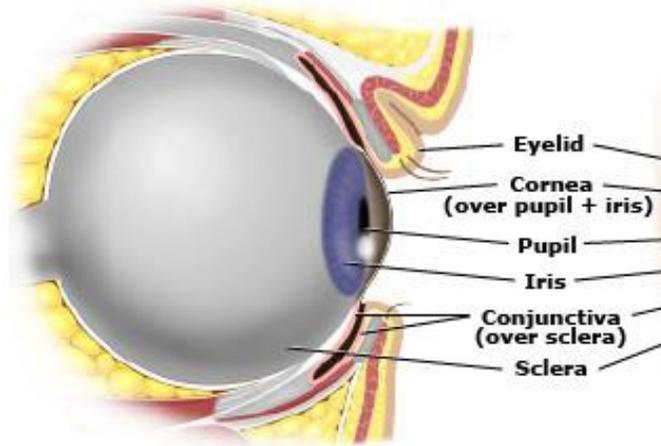
Conjunctivitis, also called “pinkeye”, is an inflammation of the conjunctiva. The conjunctiva is a thin membrane that lines the inner surface of the eyelids and the whites of the eyes (called the sclera).

I. Symptoms:

- a. Red Eye.
- b. Discharge.

II. Causes:

- c. Bacterial infections.
- d. Viral infections.
- e. Allergies.
- f. Foreign body.



Viral conjunctivitis:

Viral conjunctivitis is caused by the same virus that can cause the common cold. There may be other symptoms present such as swollen lymph nodes, fever, sore throat, and runny nose. This is highly contagious and spreads by contact.

I. Symptoms:

- a. Redness.
- b. Watery discharge.
- c. Burning, sandy, or gritty feeling in the eye.
- d. Morning crusting may be present.
- e. The second eye usually becomes infected within a day or two.

II. Treatment:

- a. Topical antihistamine/decongestant eye drops can help relieve the discomfort but will not shorten the course of the infection.
- b. Warm or cool compresses may also help relieve symptoms.
- c. There is no cure for viral conjunctivitis.
- d. Symptoms are usually worse for the first three to five days, and then gradual improvement is seen over the course of two to three weeks.

Bacterial conjunctivitis:

Bacterial conjunctivitis is highly contagious and spread by contact.

I. Symptoms:

- a. Redness and thick discharge from one eye.
- b. Both eyes can become infected.
- c. The discharge is usually yellow, white, or green.
- d. There is discharge throughout the day.
- e. The eye may be "stuck shut" in the mornings.

II. Treatment:

- a. Antibiotic eye drops or ointment helps shorten duration of symptoms.
- b. In most cases, the infection will resolve on its own if not treated.

Allergic conjunctivitis:

Allergic conjunctivitis is caused by airborne allergens that come in contact with the eye such as dog or cat dander, grass and weed pollens, dust mites, and molds. Allergic conjunctivitis can occur acutely but may also be present seasonally or all year round depending upon the allergen.

I. Symptoms:

- a. Both eyes are usually affected
- b. Redness, watery discharge, and itching
- c. Burning and sensitivity to light is possible
- d. Swelling of the eyelids can occur
- e. Rubbing the eyes will worsen symptoms

II. Treatment:

- a. Avoid rubbing eyes
- b. Artificial tears, cool compresses, or antihistamine eye drops may help alleviate symptoms
- c. Minimize exposure to allergens
- d. Oral antihistamines may prevent symptoms from developing or treat symptoms once they occur

Nonspecific conjunctivitis:

Dry eyes may cause chronic or intermittent redness or discharge. Getting splashed with a chemical may cause eyes to become red and have a discharge. A foreign body such as dust, eyelash, dirt, etc. may cause redness and discharge for 12 to 24 hours after the object is removed.

Treatment is usually not necessary although a lubricant may help with symptoms.

Prevention:

Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis are highly contagious and spread by direct contact with secretions or contact with contaminated objects.

- Anyone with conjunctivitis should not share handkerchiefs, tissues, towels, cosmetics, or bed sheets/pillows with uninfected family or friends.
 - Hand washing is essential in preventing the spread of infection
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Hordeolum (Stye)

A stye is a red and painful lump on the eyelid that occurs when a small gland on the edge of the eyelid becomes infected or inflamed.

I. Symptoms:

- a. Red, painful lump on the edge of the eyelid
- b. Develops over a few days
- c. May look like a pimple
- d. Can cause eyelid swelling

II. Treatment:

- a. Warm, wet pressure on the stye can help relieve discomfort
 - i. Wet a clean wash cloth with warm water and put over stye. When the washcloth cools, reheat with warm water and put back over the stye. Repeat this treatment for 15 minutes, 4 times a day.
- b. Do not squeeze the stye
- c. Do not wear makeup or contact lenses until the stye heals

III. Seeking further evaluation:

A stye should be evaluated by a physician or other health care provider if:

- a. The stye doesn't go away after being treated for a week
- b. The stye becomes very big, bleeds, or affects vision
- c. The whole eye becomes red
- d. The whole eyelid becomes red and swollen
- e. The redness or swelling spreads to the cheek or other parts of the face

IV. Prevention:

- a. Wash hands before touching the eyes
- b. For contact wearers, wash hands before putting in the contact lenses and keep contact lenses clean
- c. Take off eye makeup each night
- d. Do not use old eye makeup
- e. Do not share eye makeup with others