

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINKEYE)

Conjunctivitis is redness and inflammation of the membrane (conjunctiva) that covers the eye and lines the inner surface of the eyelid. Pinkeye is a common infection in young children.

CAUSE	Bacteria, viruses, allergies, eye injuries, or chemicals.
SYMPTOMS	Includes redness, itching, pain and discharge, depending on the cause. Bacterial conjunctivitis can sometimes be distinguished from other forms of conjunctivitis by a more purulent (pus) discharge.
SPREAD	Touching the secretions from the eyes, nose, or mouth of infected persons.
INCUBATION	It takes about 1 to 12 days after exposure for symptoms to begin, usually 1 to 3 days.
CONTAGIOUS PERIOD	While symptoms are present.
EXCLUSION	<p><u>Childcare</u> and <u>School</u>: Purulent Conjunctivitis (redness of eyes and/or eyelids with thick white or yellow eye discharge and eye pain): Until examined by a healthcare provider and approved for readmission.</p> <p><u>Childcare</u> and <u>School</u>: Nonpurulent conjunctivitis (redness of eyes with a clear, watery eye discharge but without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness): None, may be considered if child is unable to keep hands away from eyes.</p>
DIAGNOSIS	Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has redness of eyes and/or eyelids with pus and/or fever or eye pain.
TREATMENT	Antibiotic treatment (eye ointment or drops) is occasionally prescribed. If the infection appears to be viral, no specific antiviral treatment is usually needed.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Use a tissue or your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.
- Encourage children not to rub eyes. Keep the child's eyes wiped free of discharge. Avoid contact with eye drainage.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with eye drainage. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.**
- DO NOT share any articles, such as towels and washcloths, eye makeup, contact lens solution, or eye drops.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.