

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	Viruses, bacteria, 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	<u>Childcare</u> and <u>School</u> : No exclusion , unless the child has a fever or is not healthy enough to participate in routine activities. Antibiotics or a note from a health care provider are <u>not</u> required. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends considering conjunctivitis like the common cold – both diseases are easily spread among children and both resolve without treatment.
DIAGNOSIS	Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider if their child has redness of eyes and/or eyelids with pus and/or fever or eye pain.
TREATMENT	If a bacterial infection is diagnosed, antibiotic treatment is available. Antibiotics may shorten the duration of illness minimally – most children with conjunctivitis recover after 5 or 6 days without antibiotics. The role of antibiotics in preventing spread of conjunctivitis is unclear. 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 in the trash.
- Encourage children not to rub eyes. Keep child's eyes wiped free of discharge. Avoid contact with eye drainage. Wear gloves when administering eye drops/medications or use a cotton-tipped swab to apply medication to the eyes.
- 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 that come in contact with the eyes, such as towels, washcloths, eye makeup, contact lens solution, or eye drops.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

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