

Pink Eye

Conjunctivitis

Pink eye or conjunctivitis is a common, mild infection of the eye. It can be caused by bacterial or viral infection. Allergies and other irritants in the environment can also cause pink eye.

A child with pink eye will have discomfort, a scratchy feeling, itching, or pain in an eye. The white of the eye may appear pink or red, sometimes with visible blood vessels. The inner eyelid may appear inflamed and red as well. If the child has a viral infection, the discharge from the eye will usually appear watery and clear. Discharge from a bacterial infection will often appear thick and white, yellow, or green in color. Infectious pink eye, either viral or bacterial, may begin in one eye and move to the other eye. Pink eye caused by allergies or other irritants will arise in both eyes at once.

The incubation period for viral conjunctivitis is up to a week. The infection may last up to two weeks. In bacterial cases, the incubation period is a few days. A bacterial infection typically lasts up to a week when treated with antibiotics.

Typical treatment for pink eye from a viral infection is a warm or cool water compress. The compress may sooth the discomfort felt by the child. If the child appears to have a bacterial infection, please seek care from a medical provider. Treatment for bacterial infections usually includes the use of an antibiotic. A child with a bacterial infection will need to be kept at home and treated with the antibiotic for one full day before returning to school or child care. A warm compress also relieves symptoms of bacterial infections.

Pink eye from allergies and irritants often is treated with lubricant and antihistamine eye drops.

Proper hand washing is highly recommended to prevent the transmission of pink eye and other infections.

Other ways to prevent pink eye from spreading include:

- avoid touching an infected person's eye,
- avoid touching tissues or gauzes that have been in contact with the person's eye, and
- not sharing or using washcloths, towels, pillowcases, eye makeup, or eye drops that have been in contact with the infected person.

If you come into contact with any material that has been in contact with an infected person's eye, immediate, thorough hand washing is recommended to prevent the spread of pink eye to others.

It is important to seek medical advice and treatment if a child has symptoms of pink eye, whether the infection is viral or bacterial. If the child complains of severe pain, changes in eyesight or sensitivity to light, seek medical attention immediately, especially after treatment has been completed.

**Wash your hands well.
Wash your hands often.**