



# Pink Eye (conjunctivitis)

## What is Pink Eye?

Pink eye is treatable inflammation or infection of the transparent membrane (conjunctiva) that lines the eyelid and part of the eyeball. The cause of pink eye is commonly a bacterial or viral infection or an allergic reaction. Viral and bacterial causes of pink eye are contagious and typically require treatment for cure.

## How is Pink Eye spread?

Anyone can get pink eye, however it can be much more serious in newborns. Pink eye is transmitted through contact with eye or upper respiratory discharges of an infected person. It can also be transmitted through contaminated fingers, clothing and other articles like bedding. Pink eye is also easily transmitted from a person's infected eye to their uninfected eye. Symptoms occur 1-3 days after exposure.

Pink eye does not typically require exclusions from work or school settings.

## How is Pink Eye treated?

See your doctor for early diagnosis and treatment. Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic eye drops or an eye ointment for a bacterial infection. An improvement of signs and symptoms should be noticed within one or two days. It is important to complete treatment as prescribed by your physician to prevent recurrence of the infection.

Viral conjunctivitis should not be treated with antibiotics. Like a common cold, the virus has to run its course. Symptoms may worsen in the first few days and then gradually clear on their own.

When pink eye is caused by an allergen, over the counter medications can manage the symptoms, but you should always consult a physician to help determine the cause.

## How can Pink Eye be prevented?

- Keep hands and fingers away from eyes, use a tissue to clean them.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after eye contact.
- Use separate towels and wash cloths for each person in the home and change them daily.
- Wash laundry in hot soapy water.
- Use a wet wash cloth to soften eye drainage when cleaning eyes.
- Children attending school or day care should be kept at home only if it is herpes simplex conjunctivitis and eye is watering.
- Complete the entire course of medication your doctor prescribes

## Symptoms of Pink Eye:

- Red and swollen eyelids
- Pain or itching of the eyes
- Thick yellow drainage from the eyes
- Blurred vision and sensitivity to light
- Watery eyes
- Gritty feeling in one or both eyes

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[www.mijackson.org](http://www.mijackson.org)

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