

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINKEYE)

→ Childcare and preschools use this page, schools use pages 192-193

Conjunctivitis, commonly known as pinkeye, is redness and soreness (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: May include 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: Direct contact with 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 (depending on the cause).

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: Until the active infection passes.

EXCLUSION: Conjunctivitis with pus and/or fever or eye pain: until the child has been evaluated by the healthcare provider and until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins, or until the healthcare provider has cleared the child for readmission.

Conjunctivitis without pus (clear, watery discharge without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness): no exclusion necessary.

DIAGNOSIS: Call your healthcare provider if your child has conjunctivitis with pus and/or fever, eye pain, eyelid redness, or if you have any questions.

TREATMENT: Antibiotic treatment (eye ointment or drops) may be prescribed.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. 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 infectious diseases.**
2. Keep the child's eyes wiped free of discharge. Avoid touching the eye drainage.
3. Dispose of used tissues.
4. DO NOT share any articles, such as towels and washcloths.
5. Clean and disinfect mouthed toys at least daily and when soiled. Try to prevent sharing of toys when conjunctivitis is present.

For more information, you or your healthcare provider may call Hennepin County Community Health Department at (952) 351-5230, or call your local health department.

Prepared by Hennepin County Community Health Department with the support of the local and state disease prevention and control staff and childcare consultants.