

# Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

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## What is conjunctivitis (pink eye)?

Pink eye is an inflammation of the eye and eyelid most commonly caused by either a bacterial or a viral infection.

## Who gets pink eye?

Pink eye is most common among preschoolers and school-age children because of crowding and lack of good hygiene and handwashing techniques.

## What are the symptoms of pink eye?

Symptoms appear 1 to 3 days after exposure. The symptoms of pink eye include pink or red color in the white of the eye, pain, burning, or itching in the eye, red and swollen eyelid, thick yellow drainage from the eye, sensitivity to light, and watery eyes. Generally the drainage will form a crust over the eye during the night.

## How is pink eye spread?

Pink eye is highly contagious. It is passed by coming in contact with the tears or discharges from the infected eye and then touching your eye. It can also be passed from one eye to the other.

Conjunctivitis is often associated with an upper respiratory infection (common cold) and then it can be spread through droplets in the air from sneezing or coughing.

## What is the treatment for pink eye?

Doctors may give an eye medication depending on the cause of the infection. Keep the eye clean and lubricated with drops which will decrease discomfort until the infection is gone.

If the drainage forms a crust over the eyes during the night, put a warm washcloth on the eye to soften the crust. This may need to be repeated several times. Use a washcloth or tissues to gently wipe the crusts from eyelashes.

Wash hands frequently with soap and water, particularly before and after treating the eye.

## Are there complications from pink eye?

Symptoms suggesting more severe eye infection include severe eye pain, change in vision, extreme sensitivity to light, and heat and swelling on the eyelids.

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## How can pink eye be prevented?

Children with conjunctivitis should be excluded from school or daycare until cleared by a physician that they are no longer contagious, or until the symptoms have resolved.

Use separate washcloths and towels. After each use, launder the towels in hot soapy water. Change pillowcases daily.

Wash hands often to prevent spread from person to person, especially after touching the infected eyes. Try to avoid touching infected eyes.

Do not share eye make-up, face make-up, make-up brushes, contact lenses and containers, or eyeglasses. If you have pink eye, throw away eye cosmetics to avoid re-infection.

## How do I get more information on pink eye?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: (269) 969-6383

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/about/index.html>

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

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