

CONJUNCTIVITIS - Pink Eye

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the clear membrane that lines the inside of the eyelid and covers the eye ball.

SYMPTOMS: The infected person complains of itching or burning eyes and sometimes photophobia (light sensitivity). Tearing is frequently an initial symptom. There is also a feeling of roughness inside the eyelids. The conjunctiva swells, the eye and lids become pink, and there is a discharge from the infected eye (sometimes crusting on the lashes, especially in the morning). Vision is not affected.

DIAGNOSIS: As a general rule, with bacterial conjunctivitis, there will be a pus discharge and crusting. Viral conjunctivitis may exhibit a watery discharge. An allergic conjunctivitis may have a thick watery discharge. Identification may need to be made by a smear or culture.

TRANSMISSION: Conjunctivitis is transmitted by contact with the discharge from the infected eye or the respiratory tract of infected persons. It may also be spread by contaminated fingers, clothing or articles (eye makeup). It can be transmitted in the acute stage during the active infection. The incubation period is approximately 24 to 27 hours.

TREATMENT:

- A local application of an antibiotic ointment or drops are necessary.
- Clean the accumulated discharge from the eye with a cotton ball or clean wash cloth before applying medication.
- The infected person can generally return to school 24 hours after antibiotic treatment.
- Instruct the person to use careful hand washing technique, avoid sharing towels, and avoid rubbing his eyes.
- Wash contaminated clothes and towels in hot water and and dry with a hot dryer.

SCHOOL IMPLICATIONS:

- Children should not attend school while the infection is in the acute phase or until 24 hours after use of antibiotics.
- Prompt treatment of infected persons helps prevent transmission of the infection.

- Hands should be washed frequently and thoroughly.
- Avoid touching face, especially the eye area.