

P I N K E Y E

Infectious conjunctivitis is usually caused by a virus, adenovirus. As it is inflammation of the white part of the eye it shouldn't affect the vision at all. Both viral and bacterial conjunctivitis is highly contagious, that's why kids and teachers alike are excluded from school when infected.



Allergy to pollen, animal dander, makeup, contact lens solutions or enzyme cleaners may also cause the eye to look red. The treatment for these conditions is simply avoiding the offending allergen or sometimes anti-allergy drops.

Because the irritation of the virus causes a constant discharge from the eye, affected individuals are constantly clearing their eyes with their fingers. These fingers then interact with others fingers either directly (handshake) or indirectly (door knob, water faucet, towels, etc) and give yet another individual the opportunity to experience the joy of pink eye by bringing their non-contaminated hands to their eyes!

From the above, you should realize why families pass pink eye to each other. You CAN beat the odds by the following:

- Encourage the person with pink eye to use Kleenex or Q-tips to clear his/her eyes (no fingers).
- Have everyone use separate towels - including the small hand towels.
- Get in the habit of never putting your fingers in your eyes or nose, particularly in public places where your hands touch all sorts of objects.

The benefits of the above also include lessening your chances for spread of colds too!

Rarely does pink eye get infected with bacteria - so rarely is an antibiotic needed. There are no antibiotics effective against viruses. A warm washcloth placed over the eyes several times a day will help the discharge clear a little faster, but count on about 2-5 days of discharge.

If you wear contacts, immediately throw out the pair of contacts you were wearing. Use the medication till the eyes are looking entirely normal again. Then use no medication for 24 hours and only then if everything still looks good can you put a fresh set of lenses in.

If redness begins to spread further and further around the eyelids, or a high fever develops, or it hurts badly, the eyes should be checked again. The area schools won't let kids back in school until they prove they've been taking medicated eye drops or ointment for a day. As such, we may prescribe antibiotic eye drops even if we think it is viral. Whatever medicine doesn't stay in the eye should be wiped along the eyelid margin.

Please remember that the secretions are contagious whether or not antibiotics are used. The drainage will typically last 2-5 days, and will be contagious the whole time. Good hygiene is the only effective way to keep from spreading the causative virus.

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