



Conjunctivitis

What is conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the membrane that lines the inside of the eyelid and covers the white part of the eye. There are three types of conjunctivitis inflammation: infectious, allergic and chemical. Infectious conjunctivitis or “pink-eye” is caused by bacteria or a virus. It is most common in children under age 5. It is easily spread to others by touch, clothing or other shared articles, like eye makeup applicators and eye medications. Allergic conjunctivitis may be caused by pollen, cosmetics, animals or fabrics. Irritants like air pollution, noxious fumes, and chlorine in swimming pools may cause chemical conjunctivitis.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms are: pinkness to redness in the eye(s); itchy, watery eyes; yellow discharge from the eyes; swollen eyelids and a scratchy feeling in the eyes.

How is it diagnosed?

Conjunctivitis is usually diagnosed by observation. Depending upon the age of the child, the health care provider may examine the discharge from the eye or take eye cultures to determine the cause.

How is it treated?

An eye ointment or drops may be prescribed by your health care provider.

School/Child care attendance

Infectious conjunctivitis (“pink-eye”) is contagious. Children who have a lot of eye drainage and itching should not return to school/child care until approved by a health care provider. Children should be clear of symptoms before returning to school/childcare.

Home/School/Child care precautions

- Use a separate tissue or damp cloth for each eye and then throw away or wash after each use.
- Wash hands after helping children with eye or nose drainage.
- Teach children to wash their hands after blowing their nose.
- Wash hands before and after handling eye medications or contact lenses.
- Disinfect toys at least daily with a solution of one tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water.
- Children may return to childcare or school after 24 hours of treatment.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 336-641-7777 or www.myguilford.com