

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

CONJUNCTIVITIS

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) is an irritation or infection of the conjunctiva (pink lining) of the eye which can be caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi or environmental allergens.

Symptoms

- White or yellowish pus in one or both eyes that can cause the eyelids to stick shut in the morning
- Redness, itching, or burning of the eyes
- Swollen eyelids
- Painful eye area
- Increased amount of tears and sensitivity to light
- Gritty feeling in the eye

Transmission

- Conjunctivitis results from viruses, bacteria, irritants (like smog or swimming pool chlorine), and allergens (like pet dander or dust mites) either infecting or irritating the eye and eyelid lining.
- Conjunctivitis from irritants or allergens is not contagious. Viral and bacterial conjunctivitis are very contagious and spread rapidly and easily.
- The germs that cause conjunctivitis may be present in nasal secretions (snot, mucus), as well as in the discharge from the eyes. Germs that cause conjunctivitis are usually transmitted by direct contact, such as rubbing the eye with a contaminated hand that has touched secretions from an infected person.
- Sharing towels, swimming in contaminated water, or even contaminated cosmetics like eye shadow could also cause conjunctivitis.

Treatment

- Pink eye is usually mild and generally gets better on its own, even without treatment.
- If you have pink eye, remove any discharge from around the eyes several times a day with a clean washcloth or tissue. Wash hands with soap and warm water before and after cleansing the eyes.
- Treatment of pink eye depends on the cause. A health care provider can test to determine if it is caused by allergies, bacteria, viruses, or fungi. Bacterial infections can be treated with antibiotics.
- Newborns are at greater risk of eye damage and should see a health care provider.

Prevention

- Handwashing is the best way to avoid infections. Wash hands thoroughly and often. Use disposable tissues and paper towels.
- Wash towels, sheets, and pillowcases in hot water and detergent. Don't share these items with others.
- Avoid touching or rubbing eyes. Clean eyeglasses and contact lens cases often. Use fresh solution when storing your contact lenses; never let anyone else use or handle your contact lenses.
- Don't share make-up, make-up brushes, or anything that touches your face, including eyeglasses.

Additional Information

In most cases, children or employees in child care and schools should stay home until 24 hours of antibiotic treatment are complete.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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