

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis) Fact Sheet

What is pink eye?

Pink eye or conjunctivitis is an eye infection caused by either virus or bacteria.

What are the symptoms of pink eye?

- redness in the whites of the eyes
- swollen eyelids
- itchy eyes
- clear or yellow discharge that may make the eyelids stick together during sleep so pink eye is sometimes also called "sticky eyes"
- teary eyes

These symptoms can begin 24 – 48 hours after contact with the bacteria that can cause pink eye. If a virus is the cause of pink eye, symptoms can begin 4 to 12 days after contact.

If you have severe symptoms such as eye pain, vision changes and sensitivity to light, call your usual health care provider for evaluation.

What is the treatment for pink eye?

Consult with your usual health care provider for treatment for pink eye. Your usual health care provider might give you antibiotics or eye drops or a combination of both as he sees appropriate.

How is pink eye spread?

Pink eye is spread by direct contact with the discharges from the eyes or nose or throat of the infected person. You can get pink eye by touching contaminated articles such as clothing and then touching your eyes, or by sharing eye makeup applicators of an infected person. Children under 5 are most often affected because of crowding and lack of good handwashing and hygiene.

How is the spread of pink eye prevented?

- Wash hands after touching or wiping eyes.
- Exclude symptomatic children from school and day care setting until 24 hours after start of treatment and there is no more discharge from the eyes.
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing/sneezing.
- Dispose of soiled tissues in appropriate receptacle.
- Disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, eye makeup, wash cloths.
- Do not share binoculars, cameras, glasses with an infected person.
- Throw away used eye makeup after pink eye infection.