

# CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINKEYE)

Conjunctivitis is redness and inflammation of the membrane (conjunctiva) that covers the eye and lines the inner surface of the eyelid. Pinkeye is a common infection in young children.

**CAUSE** Bacteria, viruses, allergies, eye injuries, or chemicals.

**SYMPTOMS** Includes redness, itching, pain, and discharge, depending on the cause. Bacterial conjunctivitis can sometimes be distinguished from other forms of conjunctivitis by a more purulent (pus) discharge.

**SPREAD** Touching the secretions from the eyes, nose, or mouth of infected persons.

**INCUBATION** It takes about 1 to 12 days after exposure for symptoms to begin, usually 1 to 3 days.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD** While symptoms are present.

**EXCLUSION** Childcare and School: Purulent Conjunctivitis (redness of eyes and/or eyelids with thick white or yellow eye discharge and eye pain): Until examined by a healthcare provider and approved for readmission, and when applicable, 24 hours after treatment has been started.

Childcare and School: Non-purulent conjunctivitis (redness of eyes with a clear, watery eye discharge but without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness): None, may be considered if child is unable to keep hands away from eyes.

**DIAGNOSIS** Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has redness of eyes and/or eyelids with pus and/or fever or eye pain.

**TREATMENT** Antibiotic treatment (eye ointment or drops) is occasionally prescribed. If the infection appears to be viral, no specific antiviral treatment is usually needed.

## PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Use a tissue or your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.
- Encourage children not to rub eyes. Keep the child's eyes wiped free of discharge. Avoid contact with eye drainage.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with eye drainage.
  - Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- DO NOT share any articles, such as towels and washcloths, eye makeup, contact lens solution, or eye drops.

- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.

**For more information, please contact your local health department.**

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-434-1690 & 775-887-2190 (after hours)

[Central Nevada Health District](#) (Churchill, Mineral, Eureka, Pershing Counties) 775-866-7535

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

[Division of Public and Behavioral Health](#) (All other Counties) 775-400-0333 (24 hours)

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