

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

Pink Eye is the inflammation of the thin layer of tissue that lines the eye and the inside of the eyelid.

When conjunctivitis is caused by a viral or bacterial infection, it can be both uncomfortable and very contagious. Thankfully, conjunctivitis is usually self-limited and rarely results in serious complications. Self-limited infections can be treated without seeing a medical provider.

Symptoms

(May last 7-10 days but often resolves within 5 days)

- Redness
- Discharge
- Itching / burning
- Gritty feeling / feeling that something is in your eye
- Swollen eyelids

Self-care measures

- Use cold compresses.
- Use artificial tears or saline drops (e.g., CMC/Glycerin drops or Refresh Plus®).
- If you use contact lenses, stop until you no longer have symptoms.
- Do not use eye makeup.

NOTE: Throw away worn contacts and any eye makeup used while having symptoms.

Limit spread to others

You may be contagious for 7-14 days. This should not prevent you from attending classes or other events, but you should follow these precautions:

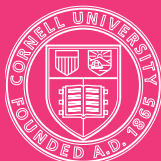
- Avoid touching your eyes.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Do not share towels.

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- Avoid intimate contact with others.
- If you work in a health care setting, a child care setting, or handle food, you should not work until there is no discharge from the eye.

When to seek care from a medical provider

- You have a known injury to the eye.
- If you have moderate / severe pain to one or both eyes.
- If you have any loss of vision (not just blurry).
- For symptoms lasting more than 7-10 days.

To make an appointment at Cornell Health, call 607-255-5155 during business hours, or go to myCornellHealth (from health.cornell.edu) and find a time that works for you.

Other resources

- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/about/causes.html
- American Optometric Association: aoa.org/patients-and-public/eye-and-vision-problems/glossary-of-eye-and-vision-conditions/conjunctivitis?sso=y



Sometimes the only symptom of conjunctivitis is a pink eye.



Other times— especially with bacterial conjunctivitis – there can be some goopy discharge.

Note: sometimes pink eye is caused by exposure to allergens (pollen, smoke, etc.) These forms of pink eye are not contagious.

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