



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

**Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

## Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

Conjunctivitis (kuhn-juhngk-tuh-**vai**-tuhs), or pink eye, is a swelling (inflammation) of the conjunctiva. The conjunctiva is a clear membrane that covers the white part of the eye and the inner part of the eyelids (Picture 1).

- Conjunctivitis may be caused by germs (viruses or bacteria), an allergy, or by something that gets into the eye.
- Conjunctivitis caused by germs passes easily from one person to another (is contagious). This occurs by touching the infected eye or its tears and then touching a healthy eye. If you think your child has conjunctivitis, see their health care provider right away.

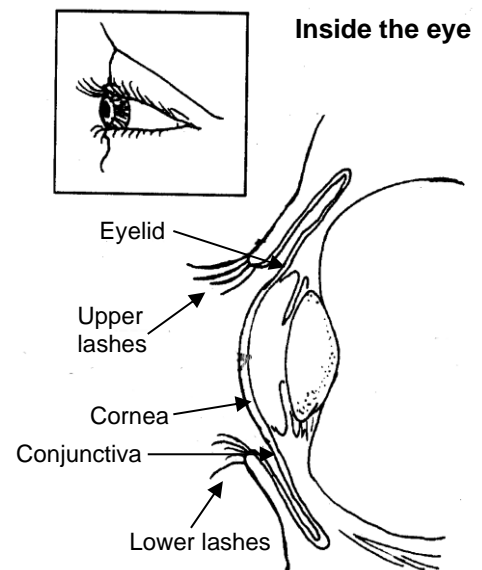
### Symptoms

Conjunctivitis usually starts in one eye and may spread to the other. Symptoms include:

- White part of the eye looks red or pink
- The eye feels sandy or gritty
- Pus (white or yellow discharge from the eye) or clear fluid that is usually worse in the morning
- Crust around the eye after sleeping, or an eye is sealed shut after sleeping
- Puffiness around the eyes
- Eyes are sensitive to light

### What to Do at Home

- Wipe any discharge from the eye with a clean, wet tissue. Start near the nose and wipe toward the ear. Blot the eye dry with a clean, dry tissue. Throw away the used tissues in a plastic bag and tie it closed.



**Picture 1** Side view of the eye. The conjunctiva covers the white part of the eye and inner part of the eyelids.

- If your child's doctor or health care provider orders antibiotic eye drops or ointment, apply as directed. Keep using the drops at least 3 days after the symptoms are gone. Don't use the eye drops or ointment for more than 2 weeks.
- Don't touch the infected eye with the eye dropper or the tip of the eye ointment. This may get germs in the medicine.
- Apply a cool compress to the eyes. Cold water on a clean washcloth works well. This will help with discomfort.
- Your child may need to wear sunglasses when in the sun.
- Children with contact lenses must switch to glasses for a while to prevent damage to the cornea of the eye.

## **Prevent the Spread of Infection**

- All family members must wash their hands often.
- Don't share towels and washcloths.
- Wash all towels and washcloths in hot, soapy water.
- When wiping the eyes, only use unscented facial tissues that can be thrown away after each use. Don't use handkerchiefs.
- Don't wear eye makeup until the eyes heal. Throw away used makeup and buy new after the eyes heal.
- Don't wear contact lenses until the eyes are fully healed. If the lenses are disposable or semi-disposable, they should be thrown away along with the case. A new case and pair of lenses should be used. If the lenses are not disposable, clean them well with contact lens solution and talk with your child's doctor or health care provider before using them again.
- Don't return your child to school or child care until the ordered eye medicine has been used for at least 24 hours. Ask your child's doctor or health care provider how long they will need to be out of school.
- Don't share pillows until the infection is gone.
- Don't use the same tissue to wipe both eyes.

## **Call the Doctor**

Call your child's doctor or health care provider if:

- The eye doesn't get better after 3 days of using the prescribed medicine
- Eye movement becomes painful. Eyes become painful or especially sensitive to light.
- Vision is blurred and repeated blinking does not help
- Eyelids become swollen and red
- Another family member has symptoms of conjunctivitis