

# Eye Infection (Conjunctivitis)

Conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye, is an inflammation of the inside of the eyelid and the membrane which covers the white part of the eye. Conjunctivitis can be caused by a bacterial or viral infection, chemical irritation, allergy or contact lenses. Antibiotics are not helpful for viral infections.

Common **symptoms** of conjunctivitis are:

- + Clear, green or yellow discharge from the eye.
- + Swollen eyelids.
- + Redness.
- + Gritty or scratchy feeling in the eye and/or pain.

## HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

- + You may use cool compresses to reduce discomfort. Clean your eye with a warm washcloth.
- + Conjunctivitis is contagious. **DO NOT** share your washcloth with anyone else, and do not use this cloth for washing/bathing.
- + Wash your hands with soap and water, particularly after touching your eye. Use paper towels to dry.
- + **DO NOT** touch or rub your eyes.
- + Gently wipe away any discharge from the eyes with tissues and discard.
- + Sunglasses may help if light bothers your eyes.
- + **DO NOT** use eye makeup until the conjunctivitis has gone. Discard current eye makeup, replace with new makeup.

## + Medication

- If **eye drop medications** have been prescribed by the doctor: pull down the lower lid of the eye needing the drops, drop 1-2 drops in the center of the lower lid. Blink to spread the medication.
- If **eye ointments** have been ordered by the doctor - pull down on the lower lid, look up and then apply a small thin line of medicine from the inner eye out. Blink slowly to spread the solution.
- **DO NOT** use over the counter medication (i.e. polysporin) unless advised to do so by your doctor.
- **DO NOT** touch medication container to eye.
- + If you wear contact lenses, stop wearing them until your eyes are completely healed.
- + For bacterial conjunctivitis, you may return to school or work 24 - 48 hours after starting the medication and your symptoms are improving, unless your doctor tells you differently.

## WHEN TO GET HELP

**See your family doctor** if you are experiencing any of the following:

- + The eye is still pink three days after starting treatment with medicine.
- + Increased eye pain.
- + The redness is spreading.
- + Blurred vision.
- + Fever occurs.
- + Eye pain or sensitivity to light.

## Eye Infection (Conjunctivitis) - *Continued*

### TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)

### RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with your primary care provider in \_\_\_ days.

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Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:  
[www.bcemn.ca/clinical\\_resource/eye-infection/](http://www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/eye-infection/)

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[bcemn.ca](http://bcemn.ca)

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

