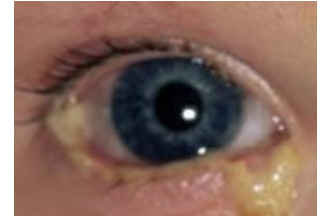


What is pink eye?

The thin, clear tissue that covers the white of the eye and the inside surface of the eyelid is called conjunctiva. Pink eye (conjunctivitis) is swelling or irritation of that tissue. It may be caused by:

- Bacteria.
- Virus.
- Allergies.
- Exposure to chemicals like smoke or cosmetics.
- Irritants such as dust.



How will it affect my child?

- Pink eye spreads from person to person by direct contact. This includes contact with hands, towels and washcloths that are touched by the affected person. It can also spread through droplets that are coughed or sneezed into the air.
- The illness starts 2 to 7 days after the contact. Signs include redness of the white part of the eye and drainage from the eye. The drainage may be watery or thick. Eyelids are pink and swollen. One or both of the eyes may be affected.
- Most often it is not painful. Your child may tell you that their eyes burn or itch. They may say it feels like something is in the eye. There should be no long-term eye or vision damage. Pus and mucus may cause blurry vision for a short time.
- Pink eye caused by a virus get better without extra medicine in 8 to 10 days.
- Pink eye caused by bacteria get better after 2 to 3 days of medicine.
- Pink eye caused by allergies will not get better until treated with allergy medicine or your child is not around what caused the allergy.

How is it treated?

Eye drops or medicine taken by mouth may be used for infections caused by bacteria or allergies. Sometimes a nasal spray may be needed as well. To give eye drops:

- Wash your hands before putting the medicine in the eye.
- Gently wipe the eyes with a tissue or cotton ball dipped in warm water. This will remove any mucus or pus from the eyelids.
- Follow the directions you are given for putting the drops or ointment in your child's eyes. Put the drops or ointment in as often as you were told to do so.
- Always treat both eyes even if only one side looks infected.
- Be sure to **wash your hands right away after** you put the medicine in your child's eyes.

Treatment (continued)

- Your child's eyes may sting or burn after the medicine is put in the eye.
- If someone else will give the treatment, tell that person the best way to put the eye drops or ointment in the eyes. Be very clear on how important it is for that person to wash their hands before and after treating the eyes.
- Ask older children not to rub their eyes. Children should wash their hands often.
- If caused by a bacteria, your child may go back to school or daycare after one full day of medicine. Some schools and daycare centers have policies about when a child with an eye infection may return. Check with your child's school or daycare center.
- Your child with pink eye should use their own towels and washcloths. Keep them separate from those used by other members of the family. Change towels and washcloths daily and wash them in hot soapy water.
- Tissues used to clean or wipe the eyes should be thrown away right after use.
- Do not let your child go swimming until the eyes are healed.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Has redness, swelling or pain that has spread around the eye or eyelid.
- Has blurry vision, double vision or is sensitive to light that gets worse.
- Has a temperature over 102° F (39° C). If your child is under 2 months old, call the doctor if the temperature is over 100.4° F (38° C).
- Has small blister-like sores close to the eye.
- Gets a cloudy look to the eye.
- Does not improve after 2 days of treating the eyes with prescribed medicine.
- Has an ear pain.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.