Conjunctivitis

FACT SHEET

What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis or pink eye is an infection of the lining of eyelid caused by a virus or bacterium.

Who Can Get Conjunctivitis?

Children are most likely to get pink eye but adults can get it too. The viruses or bacteria are found in the discharge from the infected eye. Hands become contaminated by touching\rubbing the infected eye or coming in contact with the drainage from the eye.

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- Redness of the whites of the eye(s) and inside the eyelids
- Itchiness and tearing
- Scratchy feeling or pain in the eye
- Discharge at the corners of the eye, which may crust over during sleep causing the eyelids to stick together

What is the Treatment?

Most cases are caused by a virus, and will get better without treatment. Some cases are caused by bacteria, and can be treated with eye drops or ointment prescribed by your doctor. If there is pus or discharge from the eye(s), see your doctor.

If a child has pink eye caused by bacteria (yellow or white discharge or doctor diagnoses) and is using an antibiotic ointment, the child should stay out of school or day care until 24 hours after the treatment was started. If a child has pink eye caused by a virus, the child does not have to stay home from school.

How Can You Prevent Conjunctivitis?

- Wash hands often, especially before and after treatment
- Separate the hand and face towels of the infected person from all others in the house
- Do not share personal articles used near or on the eyes such as make-up applicators
- Wash in hot water all clothing and personal articles (e.g. pillow cases) of the infected person
- Teach children good hand washing practices
- Avoid hand to eye contact