

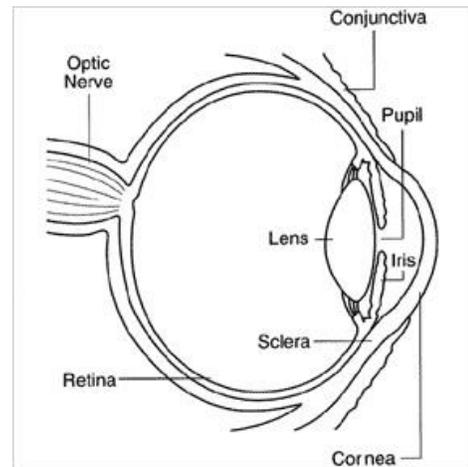
# Pink Eye in Children

## What is pink eye?

Pink eye, also called **conjunctivitis**, is the inflammation of the white of the eye. The affected eyes may be painful, itchy or burning. The eyes may tear or have a discharge that crusts during sleep causing the eyes to be “stuck shut” in the morning.

## What causes pink eye?

Bacterial or viral infections are the most common causes of pink eye. Allergic reactions or exposure to irritants can also cause pink eye. Identifying the cause may be difficult because the signs and symptoms tend to be similar regardless of the underlying cause.



- **Viral conjunctivitis** may occur along with an upper respiratory tract infection, cold, or sore throat. It usually affects both eyes and is not purulent. It resolves without antibiotics. If symptoms are worsening, consult your doctor.
- **Bacterial conjunctivitis** is a common reason for children to be sent home from day care or school. It is more often in one eye and has a lot of drainage. Antibiotics may shorten the illness and reduce the spread of infection. Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic eye drops or ointment, which should resolve the infection within several days.  
Consult your healthcare provider if symptoms of bacterial conjunctivitis have not improved after 24 hours of treatment with antibiotics.
- **Allergic conjunctivitis** can be caused by allergies to pollen, dust mites, molds, or animal dander. Irritants such as contact lenses and lens solutions, chlorinated water, smog or cosmetics may also be an underlying cause of

conjunctivitis. Removing the allergen or irritant is most important. Allergy medications and eye drops can also provide relief.

### **How is pink eye diagnosed?**

A health care provider can diagnose conjunctivitis with an eye examination. In some cases, the type of conjunctivitis can be determined by assessing the person's signs, symptoms, and recent health history. Most cases resolve with time, and there is usually no need for treatment or laboratory tests.



Pink eye, also known as conjunctivitis, can cause redness, itching, and tearing.

### **What is the treatment for pink eye?**

Most cases are mild and will resolve on their own. In many cases, symptom relief can be achieved by using artificial tears for the dryness and cold packs for the inflammation. You can buy artificial tears over-the-counter without a prescription.

Seek medical attention if you have any of following symptoms:

- Moderate to severe eye pain
- Vision problems, such as sensitivity to light or blurred vision, that do not improve when any discharge present is wiped from the eye
- Intense redness in the eye
- Symptoms that worsen or persist when severe viral conjunctivitis is suspected
- You develop symptoms and are a contact lens wearer.

### **What steps can I take to prevent pink eye?**

Viral and bacterial conjunctivitis are highly contagious and can be easily spread from person to person. Allergic conjunctivitis is not contagious.

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and warm water. And wash up immediately if you've touched an affected person's eyes, linens or clothes (for example, when caring for a child who has pink eye). If soap and water

are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.
- Do not use the same eye drop dispenser/bottle for infected and non-infected eyes—even for the same person.
- Avoid sharing articles like towels, blankets, and pillowcases.
- Clean, store, and replace your contact lenses as instructed by your eye health care provider. Do not use them until symptoms resolve.
- Do not share makeup, makeup brushes, contact lenses, or eyeglasses.

There are also steps you can take to avoid re-infection once the infection goes away:

- Throw away any eye or face makeup or applicators you used while infected.
- Throw away contact lens solutions you used while infected.
- Throw away contact lenses and cases you used.
- Clean your eyeglasses and cases.

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Adapted from: National Eye Institute. [Facts About Pink Eye](#).

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