

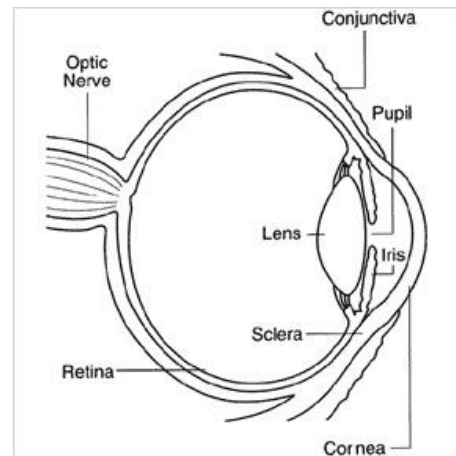
Pink Eye in Newborns

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.

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.



Can newborns get pink eye?

Newborns can develop pink eye, which is called **neonatal conjunctivitis**. Common symptoms include eye discharge and puffy, red eyelids within one day to two weeks after birth.



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

Newborn conjunctivitis may be caused by infection, irritation, or a blocked tear duct. A mother can pass on infectious conjunctivitis to her newborn during childbirth, even if she has no symptoms herself, because she may carry bacteria or viruses in the birth canal. When caused by an infection, neonatal conjunctivitis can be very serious. The most common types of neonatal conjunctivitis include:

- **Chlamydial conjunctivitis** can cause swelling of the eyelids with purulent (pus) discharge. Symptoms often appear 5-12 days after birth but may present at any time during the first month of life.
- **Gonococcal conjunctivitis** causes discharge and swelling of eyelids, which may appear 2-4 days after birth.
- **Chemical conjunctivitis** can be caused by eye drops or ointment given to newborns to help prevent bacterial eye infections. Symptoms include red eyes and eyelid swelling, and usually resolve in 24-36 hours. Most hospitals are required by state law to put drops or ointment in a newborn's eyes to prevent disease. The benefits of preventing a more serious type of conjunctivitis are thought to outweigh the risks of chemical conjunctivitis.
- **Other bacteria and viruses** can also cause conjunctivitis in a newborn. Bacteria that normally live in a woman's vagina and that are not sexually transmitted can cause neonatal conjunctivitis. The viruses that cause genital and oral herpes can also cause neonatal conjunctivitis and severe eye damage. Such viruses may be passed to the baby during childbirth.
- **Blocked tear ducts** may cause conjunctivitis.

How is pink eye treated in newborns?

Bacterial conjunctivitis may be treated with topical antibiotic eye drops and ointments, oral antibiotics, or intravenous (given through a vein) antibiotics. A combination of topical and oral, or topical and intravenous treatments are sometimes used at the same time. A saline solution may be prescribed for rinsing the baby's eye(s) to remove pus, if necessary.

- **Chlamydial conjunctivitis** in newborns is usually treated with oral antibiotics such as erythromycin. Parents are usually treated as well.
- Gonococcal conjunctivitis in newborns is usually treated with intravenous antibiotics. If untreated, this condition can lead to corneal ulcers and blindness.
- **Other types of bacterial and viral conjunctivitis** are usually treated with antibiotic eye drops or ointments. A warm compress to the eye may also help relieve swelling and irritation.
- **Chemical Conjunctivitis** usually resolves in 24-36 hours without treatment.

If the cause of the pink eye are **blocked tear ducts**. A gentle warm massage between the eye and nasal area can help. If the blocked tear duct is not cleared by 1 year of age, your child may need surgery.

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

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