

Allergic Conjunctivitis

This material will help you understand allergic conjunctivitis and how you can manage it.

What is conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis, or what we see as a “red eye,” is inflammation of the conjunctiva. The conjunctiva is the thin, clear-layer of skin that covers the white of the eye and the inner surface of the eyelid. It produces mucus to coat and moisten the surface of the eye. There are tiny blood vessels inside this thin layer. When the conjunctiva becomes irritated, these blood vessels become bigger and more noticeable. This irritation will cause the eye to appear red or pink.

What causes allergic conjunctivitis?

Allergies can cause conjunctivitis. Some allergies may make your eye feel itchy. Others may produce a long-lasting red eye. Things in the environment, such as smoke, fumes, or pollen, may also cause it. This form is not contagious. It may also vary by season if you have seasonal allergies.

With allergic conjunctivitis, you may experience:

- Pink or red eyes
- Increased tearing
- Puffy eyelids
- Itchy eyes
- Burning eyes
- White mucous in the corner of the eye

What can I do about allergic conjunctivitis?

Try to remove the cause of the allergy or irritation. Avoid contact with any animal or material that causes an allergic reaction. Wear swimming goggles if chlorinated water irritates your eyes.

Try artificial tears 4-6 times daily to soothe the eyes. Artificial tears are available over the counter. Put cold compresses (a clean washcloth in very cold water) on your eyes for five minutes. This stops some of the “itch” cells from coming to your eyes. If these changes are not enough and your allergies cause other symptoms, like a runny nose, try over-the-counter oral antihistamines. If just your eyes that are still itchy, you can try over-the-counter eye drop antihistamines. Two brands we recommend are Zaditor or Alaway. Both can be taken twice a day as needed for the itchy eyes. If these do not work, your eye doctor may suggest prescription or other over-the-counter eye drops to help relieve any symptoms.

For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/allergies.cfm>



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/conjunctivitis.html>

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