



CONJUNCTIVITIS - FACT SHEET

Nursing and Wellness Program

Persons suspected of having conjunctivitis should be seen by a physician so that appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and follow up can be obtained.

DEFINITION:

Conjunctivitis, commonly called "pinkeye," is an inflammation of the mucous membrane that lines the eyelids and extends over the white of the eye (sclera).

CAUSE:

Conjunctivitis can be caused by a bacteria, virus, allergy, chemical, or other irritants.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS: (According to cause)

Bacterial Conjunctivitis

- Sclera red or pink
- Lining of eyelid inflamed in one or both eyes
- Photophobia (sensitive to light)
- Moderate tearing
- Minimal or no itching
- Blurred vision that clears with blinking
- Purulent discharge (yellow pus)
- Dried discharge (crusting) on eyelids upon awakening (often matted shut)
- Swollen eyelids

Viral Conjunctivitis

- Minimal itching
- Sudden onset
- Initially only one eye involved
- Inflamed eyelid in one or both eyes
- Profuse tearing
- Photophobia
- Red or pink sclera
- Preauricular node (in front of ear)

Allergic Conjunctivitis

- Red and swollen lining of eyelids (conjunctiva)
- Profuse tearing (watery at first, later can become purulent)
- Both eyes involved
- Intense itching, burning, rubbing
- Nasal mucosa swollen and pale

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis may be transmitted by:

- Contact with eye discharge
- Contaminated fingers, clothing, or other articles
- Upper respiratory tract of infected persons



INCUBATION PERIOD

Bacterial: 24 to 72 hours

Viral: 5 to 12 days

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Bacterial: Anytime during course of active infection

Viral: Usually the later part of incubation period up to 14 days following onset

INITIAL MANAGEMENT

- Refer student to physician for treatment
- Exclude student from school
- Good handwashing technique
- Cool compresses

MEDICAL TREATMENT

- Differential diagnosis by physician
- Ophthalmic solution or ointment prescribed by physician

EXCLUSION/READMISSION

Bacterial and Viral Conjunctivitis

- Student should be excluded from school if eyes are red and there is a green or yellow discharge (bacterial).
- Once an excluded student has started prescribed treatment and verification of treatment by physician is made, the student may attend school.

Allergic Conjunctivitis

- Student does **NOT** need to be excluded.



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DIFFERENTIAL SYMPTOMOLOGY OF CONJUNCTIVITIS

	Bacterial	Viral	Allergic
Onset	Gradual	Sudden	Sudden
Discharge	Purulent, crusting upon awakening	Watery to purulent later	Watery
Vision	Blurred that clears with blinking	Normal	Normal
Itching/Pain	Minimal to none	Minimal	Intense
Tearing	Moderate	Profuse (watery)	Profuse
Eyelids	Swollen and inflamed	Inflamed	Inflamed and Swollen
Photophobia	Yes	Yes	No
Eyes Involved	One or both	One or both	Both
Nasal Mucosa	Normal	Normal	Swollen and Pale
Preauricular Node	No	No	Yes
Sclera	Red or pink	Red or pink	Clear or pink
Exclusion from School	Yes	Yes	No