

Conjunctivitis

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Conjunctivitis, more commonly known as Pink Eye, is a very common disease.

What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, a thin, clear layer that covers the white surface of the eye and the inner eyelid. Conjunctiva is commonly called “pink eye” and is the most common cause of red eye. The [sclera](#) (white part) of the eye has fine blood vessel within it. When the conjunctiva becomes inflamed, these blood vessels enlarge and become more prominent, thus making the eye appear red.

There are three main types of conjunctivitis:

- Infectious
- Allergic
- Chemical

Infectious conjunctivitis is usually caused by a virus or bacterial infection, is extremely contagious, and is usually associated with crusting or pus. Viruses are the most common cause of conjunctivitis. Allergies to pollen, cosmetics, or other materials to which a person is allergic can cause allergic conjunctivitis. The chemical type of conjunctivitis may be caused by irritants, such as, chlorine (in swimming pools), smoke, or fumes.

Symptoms of Conjunctivitis

The most common symptom of conjunctivitis is a red eye. Other symptoms include:

- Discharge or crusting on eyelids
- Watery eyes or excessive tearing
- Sandy or scratchy feeling in the eye
- Sensitivity to light
- Eye pain

Note that conjunctivitis usually does not directly affect vision, but you may notice changes in your vision because of excessive watering or discharge. In fact, if you notice a significant change in your vision, then you need to see your ophthalmologist to confirm the diagnosis, as many other more serious conditions can cause the symptoms listed above.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Conjunctivitis

Often, a medical evaluation is important to determine the diagnosis. After an evaluation, the type of conjunctivitis that is present determines treatment. Antibiotic eye drops or ointment treat infectious bacterial forms of conjunctivitis, whereas, chemical and allergic conjunctivitis are best treated by avoiding exposure to the irritant that is causing the

inflammation. There are also medications available that can help relieve the discomfort associated with allergic and chemical conjunctivitis. Viral conjunctivitis, which is the most common form, is not treatable by standard antibiotics. In most cases, viral conjunctivitis will clear itself after 10 to 14 days.

Good hygiene can help prevent the spread of infectious conjunctivitis. Measures include:

- Keeping hands away from eyes
- Frequent hand washing
- Replacing eye make-up frequently
- Do not share towels, eye make-up, handkerchiefs, or eye drops
- Using care and good hygiene when using contact lenses

The prognosis for conjunctivitis is usually very good. However, certain forms can develop into more serious eye conditions that can harm the eye. Therefore, it is very important to have your condition diagnosed and treated as soon as possible.