

PINK EYE (Conjunctivitis)

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the lining of the eyelid. Most eye inflammations are caused by microorganisms, mechanical irritation, or sensitivity to some substance.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include reddened eyelid lining, eyelid swelling, reddened sclera (white of the eye), and discharge (not all symptoms may be present at the same time). If a cloudy, yellow discharge is present, it indicates a bacterial infection. If the discharge is clear mucous, it is a viral infection. If allergies are the causative factor, the drainage is more stringy or watery. Sometimes the type of discharge is a clue to the cause of the inflammation.

Treatment

Warm moist compresses will aid in healing the inflammation caused by a bacterial agent or by a virus. If an allergen or irritant has caused inflammation, cool compresses are indicated.

Allergic conjunctivitis will usually respond to cool compresses, over-the-counter antihistamines (such as Benadryl), and/or Visine AC eye drops.

Mild viral inflammation will usually resolve within a couple of days. If the inflammation doesn't resolve, you need an evaluation by a physician. Bacterial conjunctivitis will need to be checked by a physician and treated with antibiotic eye drops and warm compresses.

Good hygiene is important in the prevention of conjunctivitis as well as decreasing the spread of the infection. Good hand washing and keeping your hands off of your face is vital.

Contact lens wearers should remove their lens at the first sign of any problem. The contacts should be thoroughly disinfected and not be re-inserted until a couple of days after the eye has cleared.

Contact your physician if you have any questions or problems.