

PINKEYE (CONJUNCTIVITIS) FACT SHEET

What is pink eye?

Pink eye or conjunctivitis is an eye infection caused by either virus or bacteria.

What are the symptoms of pinkeye?

- Redness in the whites of the eyes
- Swollen eyelids
- Itchy eyes
- Clear or yellow discharge that may make the eyelids stick together during sleep so pink eye is sometimes also called "sticky eyes"
- Teary eyes

Symptoms can begin 24 to 48 hours after contact with the bacteria that cause pink eye. If a virus is the cause of pink eye, symptoms can begin four to 12 days after contact. If you have severe symptoms such as eye pain, vision changes and sensitivity to light, call your health care provider for evaluation.

How is pinkeye treated?

Consult with your health care provider for treatment of pink eye. Your health care provider might give you antibiotics or eye drops or a combination of both as he sees appropriate.

How is pinkeye spread?

Pink eye is spread by direct contact with the discharges from the eyes or nose or throat of the infected person. You can get pink eye by touching contaminated articles such as clothing and then touching your eyes, or by sharing eye makeup applicators of an infected person. Children younger than 5 years old are most often affected because of crowding and lack of good handwashing and hygiene.

How can the spread of pinkeye be prevented?

- Wash hands after touching or wiping eyes.
- Exclude symptomatic children from school and day care setting until 24 hours after start of treatment and there is no more discharge from the eyes.
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Dispose of soiled tissues in appropriate receptacle.
- Disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, eye makeup or washcloths.
- Do not share binoculars, cameras or glasses with an infected person.
- Throw away used eye makeup after pink eye infection.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/pinkeye/> and <http://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/about/causes-sp.html>