



CALHOUN COUNTY

Public Health Department

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calhouncountymi.gov/publichealth
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Fact Sheet

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

What is conjunctivitis (pink eye)?

Pink eye is an inflammation of the eye and eyelid most commonly caused by either a bacterial, a viral infection, allergens, or irritants.

Who gets pink eye?

Pink eye is most common among preschoolers and school-age children because of crowding, lack of good hygiene, and handwashing techniques.

What are the symptoms of pink eye?

Symptoms appear 1 to 3 days after exposure. The symptoms of pink eye include:

- Pink or red color in the white eyes
- Swelling of the thin layer that lines the white part of the eye and/or the eyelids
- Increased tear production
- Feeling like a foreign body is in the eye(s)
- Itching, irritation, and/or burning
- Discharge
- Crusting of eyelids or lashes
- Contact lenses that feel uncomfortable and/or do not stay in place on the eye

Other symptoms may appear depending on the cause of pink eye. These symptoms may include symptoms of cold, flu, respiratory infection, ear infection, itchy nose, sneezing, or scratchy throat.

How is pink eye spread?

Several viruses and bacteria that can cause pink eye are very contagious. They usually spread from an infected person to others through:

- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Touching an object or surface with germs on it, then touching your eyes before washing your hands

What is the treatment for pink eye?

If you have conjunctivitis:

- Children with conjunctivitis should be excluded from school or daycare until cleared by a physician that they are no longer contagious, or until the symptoms have resolved.
- Wash hands often to prevent spread from person to person, especially after touching the infected eyes. Try to avoid touching infected eyes.
- To relieve some of the inflammation and dryness caused by conjunctivitis, you can use artificial tears, which can be purchased over the counter. Doctors may prescribe eye medication depending on the cause and severity of the infection. Keep the eye clean and lubricated with drops which will decrease discomfort until the infection is gone.
- Do not use the same eye drop dispenser/bottle for your infected and non-infected eyes.
- Wash pillowcases, sheets, washcloths, and towels often in hot water and detergent; wash your hands after handling such items.
- Do not share eye make-up, face make-up, make-up brushes, contact lenses, containers, or eyeglasses. If you have pink eye, throw away eye cosmetics to avoid re-infection.
- Stop using contact lenses until your primary care provider suggests otherwise.
- Clean, store, and replace contact lenses as suggested by your primary care provider.
- Do not use swimming pools.

How can pink eye be prevented?

If you are around someone with conjunctivitis:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol

- Avoid touching eyes with unwashed hands
- Do not share personal items used by an infected person

If you have already been infected:

- Throw away and replace any eye or face makeup used while infected
- Throw away and replace disposable contact lenses and solutions used while infected
- Clean extended wear lenses, eyeglasses, and cases

How do I get more information on pink eye?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/>

Spanish: <https://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/index-sp.html>

Conjunctivitis

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