

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)

Pink eye has a number of causes including viruses, bacteria, irritants (eye make-up, smoke, chlorine from pools) or allergies (pollens). Some contact wearers can actually become allergic to their lens. Symptoms of conjunctivitis are:

- Redness in the sclera (white part of the eye) or inner eyelid
- Increased tearing or itchy, burning eyes
- Thick yellow crusty discharge on lids or white to green discharge from the eye.
- Sensitivity to light or blurred vision

Most pink eye is viral (about 80%) caused by the same viruses as the common cold. It is a self-limited disease that clears up on its own within 72 hours. Ways to relieve the symptoms and prevent spreading it are:

- Protect your eyes from dirt, smoke, chlorine and other irritants.
- Don't touch or rub your eyes
- Good Hygiene- Frequent hand washing and **Wash your eye several times a day with soap and warm water.** Gently remove any discharge with fresh/new paper towels or cotton balls and discard them after use.
- Avoid eye make-up. Do not share eye make-up.
- Remove your contact lenses and wear your glasses for the duration of the symptoms. Put in new contacts after the symptoms have cleared. Never wear another person's contact lenses.
- Change your pillow case daily, and other linens and towels, as needed, with hot water and detergent. Avoid sharing linens and towels prior to washing.
- Use eye drops, such as artificial tears, to keep eyes from burning or itching. **DO NOT USE EYE DROPS THAT RELIEVE REDNESS.** These can cause more irritation.

Pink eye caused by bacteria, which includes STDs, **MUST** be treated with antibiotics in the form of eye drops, ointment or pills. These should be taken for the length of time the doctor has prescribed them for even if the infection appears improved or gone. Treat both eyes and discard the bottle after the treatment is completed.

Return to the health center if symptoms are not improving after treatment or eyes are worsening.