

## Conjunctivitis (pink eye)

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation (irritation) of the eyes. It can result from infections with a virus or bacterium; it can also be caused by allergies or chemicals. Infectious conjunctivitis is very contagious. It spreads from person to person by direct contact with discharge from the eyes.

Conjunctivitis can cause redness, itching, or pain. There is usually discharge, which may be thick (yellow or green) or watery. The eyelids may be swollen and slightly pink, and the eyelashes may be stuck together when the child awakens in the morning.

Bacterial infections are treated with antibiotics. Some are taken by mouth; others are in the form of drops or ointment and are put directly into the eye. Children with infectious conjunctivitis are considered contagious until twenty-four hours after antibiotic treatment is begun. Careful hand washing is important in preventing the spread of the disease. If you suspect infectious conjunctivitis, keep your child at home and contact your physician.