



## CONJUNCTIVITIS (“PINK EYE”) - FACT SHEET

### DEFINITION:

Conjunctivitis, commonly called "pinkeye" is an inflammation of the membrane that lines the eyelids and extends over the whites of the eyes (sclera).

### CAUSE:

Conjunctivitis can be caused by bacteria, virus, allergy or immune response, a chemical or irritant.

### CHARACTERISTICS:

#### A. Bacterial Conjunctivitis

- May affect one or both eyes
- Green or yellow discharge
- May be crusted shut when awakening
- Red or pink, minimal itchy, painful eye
- Minimal or no itching
- Blurred vision that clears with blinking
- Not contagious if medications started
- Less common in children older than 5 years

#### C. Allergic Conjunctivitis

- Itchiness, redness and excessive tearing
- Usually affects both eyes, but not always
- Intense itching, burning, rubbing
- Nasal linings often also swollen and pale
- Not contagious

#### B. Viral Conjunctivitis

- Pink, swollen, watery eyes; minimal itch
- Starts with one eye; may affect both
- Sensitivity to light (“photophobia”)
- Contagious sometimes before symptoms
- Contagious until signs, symptoms gone
- If caused by “adenovirus”, it comes with fever and cold and can be contagious for up to 14 days

#### D. Chemical Conjunctivitis (e.g., chlorine)

- Red, watery eyes
- Usually within minutes to hours after swimming or shortly after contact with irritating substance

### MODE OF TRANSMISSION & CONTROL

Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis may be transmitted by:

- Contact with eye discharge
- Contaminated fingers, clothing, or other articles
- Upper respiratory tract of infected persons

Bacterial conjunctivitis can resolve without antibiotic treatment; it's usually caused by the same bacteria that are normally found in throats and noses of many people and usually does not cause a problem. Most resolve in 5-6 days with or without antibiotics.

### HOME MANAGEMENT

- Contact your child's physician immediately if there is pain, swelling or severe photophobia (very sensitive to light).
- Persons suspected of having conjunctivitis may be seen by a physician for appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and follow up. But this is voluntary, and documentation of the visit for school is not required.
- Good hand washing technique before and after touching the eyes, nose and mouth. Sanitation of objects commonly touched by hands or faces (e.g., toys).
- Keep child home from school only if: child too ill to participate in school, pink eye is accompanied by fever, if requested by health department because of an outbreak, or recommended by child's own doctor. Antibiotics are not required to return to school.