

## Patient information factsheet

# Conjunctivitis

**Conjunctivitis is usually an infection or inflammation of the outer layer of the eye (or the conjunctiva). It can occur if you have a cold or have been near someone with a cold. Conjunctivitis is not usually serious, but it can affect both eyes and can be passed from person to person.**

### Symptoms

Conjunctivitis can make the white parts of your eyes turn pink or red. You may feel a gritty or burning sensation in your eyes.

The two most common types of conjunctivitis are bacterial conjunctivitis and viral conjunctivitis. Both types can occur in children and adults.

- If you have bacterial conjunctivitis, your eyes may be sticky with yellow or green discharge throughout the day. They will feel itchy and your eyelids may become swollen.
- If you have viral conjunctivitis, some sticky discharge may be present in the morning but your eyes may also be very watery. Your eyelids may become very swollen.

### Treating conjunctivitis

If you have conjunctivitis, please visit your local pharmacist for advice.

- Bacterial conjunctivitis is treated with antibiotics. Your pharmacist can give you an antibiotic called chloramphenicol, which is applied to the affected eye as an ointment four times a day for a week.
- Viral conjunctivitis does not respond to antibiotics. Your pharmacist can give you supportive lubricant eye drops called hypromellose drops or clinitas carbomer gel drops. You should apply these drops to the affected eye four to six times a day.

If your child is below two years of age and has conjunctivitis, please contact your GP. They may prescribe an alternative antibiotic, such as Fucithalmic, applied as drops to the affected eye twice a day for a week.

### Contact lens wearers

If you wear contact lenses and you notice that your eye is watery or sticky, take your lenses out and contact eye casualty directly on telephone: **023 8120 6592**.

### While you have conjunctivitis:

- don't share flannel or towels with anyone else
- don't share your eye drops with anyone else
- don't attend work whilst you have red, watery or sticky eyes if you work with children, elderly people or patients, or if you handle food in your job

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- do throw your eye drops away after you have finished using them (most eye drops are only expected to stay sterile for 28 days once opened)
- do wash your hands thoroughly before and after putting any drops in your eyes
- do use disposable paper tissues to wipe your eyes. Use one tissue per eye to prevent cross-infection and throw them straight into the bin after use
- do use household cleaning wipes to wipe down any shared telephones, computers or desk spaces you use. This is to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to others

## Getting better

Bacterial conjunctivitis should start improving after three days of antibiotics. If your sticky eye does not improve after three days of using chloramphenicol ointment, please contact your GP for advice.

Viral conjunctivitis lasts longer and may not improve for seven to ten days. If the lids become swollen and you have a temperature, please contact eye casualty directly for advice.

## Further information

For further information, please speak to a member of our eye casualty team directly on telephone: **023 8120 6592**.

## Useful links

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Conjunctivitis-infective/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Conjunctivitis-infective/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

## Contact us

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**If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.**