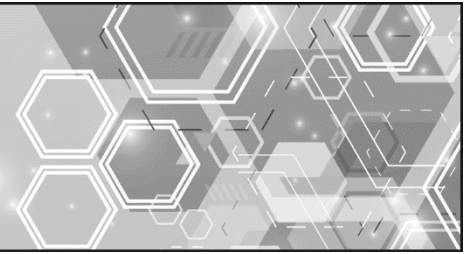




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

What is it?

Conjunctivitis (“pink eye”) is an infection of the covering of the eye and the inside of the eyelid. It can be caused by either bacteria or viruses. Pink eye can also be caused by allergies, exposure to chemicals, smoke, and other irritants, injury, or excessive rubbing.

How is it spread?

Pink eye caused by bacteria or viruses spreads easily. It can be spread directly from person to person through contact with discharge from an infected eye, or indirectly when an object contaminated with the bacteria or virus (e.g., a tissue) touches another person’s eye. It can also be spread by droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

What do I look for?

Symptoms may include a scratchy feeling or pain in the eye, excessive tearing, pink or red color in the white part of the eye, sensitivity to light, swollen eyelids, and discharge from the eye that may feel sticky.

How is it treated?

Pink eye is managed and treated differently depending on the cause. It is important to ask a health care provider if the pink eye is caused by a virus, bacteria, or due to other causes.

Bacterial pink eye infections are treated with antibiotics prescribed by your health care provider. Antibiotics are not effective when pink eye is caused by a virus. Viral pink eye infections will resolve on their own, usually in two weeks. Pink eye caused by allergies usually improves after removing the allergen. To promote comfort, use a clean, wet, cold towel or face cloth to help remove discharge or crust from around the eye, making sure to use a clean part of the towel for each wipe.

Children with pink eye should stay home until seen by a health care provider. If the pink eye is caused by bacteria, children can return to school or childcare 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has started. Children with viral pink eye can return to school or childcare after they have been seen by a health care provider.

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If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How can I protect myself?

- Do not rub or touch the affected eye(s).
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty.
- Do not share personal items, such as towels, wash cloths, tissues, pillowcases, make up, make up brushes, and contact lenses. Wash all soiled items in soapy water.
- Throw away any eye make up, face make up, make up brushes, contact lenses and contact lens solutions that were used during infection.
- Clean eyeglasses and cases that were used during infection.
- Clean contact lenses as instructed by your eye doctor.
- Do not use swimming pools during infection.
- If you are ill, stay at home and isolate yourself from others.

May 4, 2023

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