

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINKEYE)

Information for School-Aged Children

Conjunctivitis, commonly known as pinkeye, is redness and soreness (inflammation) of the membrane (conjunctiva) that covers the eye and lines the inner surface of the eyelid. Viral conjunctivitis is often found along with the common cold or other mild cold-like illnesses. Bacterial conjunctivitis is uncommon in children older than 5 years of age.

CAUSE:

Bacteria, viruses, allergies, eye injuries, or chemicals.

SYMPTOMS:

May include redness, itching, pain, and eye discharge depending on the cause. Bacterial conjunctivitis can sometimes be distinguished from other forms of conjunctivitis by a more purulent (white or yellow) eye discharge (pus).

SPREAD:

Bacterial and viral infections can be spread by contact with the secretions from the eyes, nose and mouth, for example, if a person's fingers are contaminated with secretions and then they touch their eyes. Spread can also occur by sharing towels, washcloths, eye, makeup (e.g. eyeliner, eye shadow, and mascara), multi-dose eye drops or medications, or contact lens solution used by a person with conjunctivitis.

INCUBATION:

It takes about 1 to 12 days depending on the organism, usually 1 to 3 days, after exposure for symptoms to begin.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:

While symptoms are present.