



Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

What is it?

Conjunctivitis, often called pink eye, is an infection of the eye. Either bacteria or virus can cause it.

How can it be recognized?

The affected eye can produce lots of tears and discharge, itching, and the white part of the eye becomes pink.

How long from exposure until the symptoms develop (incubation)?

Time between exposure and illness is from one to three days.

When is it contagious?

An individual with pink eye is contagious as long as the discharge is present or until prescription medication has been used in the eye for at least 24 hours. A doctor's diagnosis is needed.

How is it spread?

This infection is spread by direct and indirect contact. Persons often pass the infection by rubbing their eyes, then touching someone or something. Conjunctivitis can also be spread when people wash, dry, or wipe faces and then use the same towel or washcloth on another person's face.

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What should be done?

- Medical supervision is encouraged.
- Practice frequent and thorough hand washing.
- Separate a person with an active infection until he has been on medicine for at least 24 hours.
- If the disease is determined to be bacterial in origin, anyone in contact with the ill person should be made aware that Pink Eye has occurred and encouraged to watch closely for signs of the illness.
- Environmental surfaces and equipment should be cleaned and disinfected following use by an infected or potentially infected individual.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health Department
(405) 425-4437*

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