

# Get the Facts About Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)

Pinkeye is an infection and inflammation of the lining of the eyelid and sclera (the white of the eye). Its primary symptom is bright pink or red eyes, followed by a watery or thick, yellowish-green drainage. Other symptoms may include itching, eye pain, increased tearing and a gritty feeling in the eyes. There are three types of pinkeye: bacterial, viral and allergic.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

**Bacterial pinkeye** is distinguished by thick, yellowish-green drainage from the affected eye. This may prevent the eye from opening.

**Viral pinkeye** is the most common form of pinkeye. Symptoms usually include a watery drainage from the eyes and is often accompanied by cold-like symptoms. Eyelids may appear swollen.

**Allergic pinkeye** is caused by allergies or chemicals (such as contact lens solution or cosmetics). Eyes tend to be itchy with a watery discharge.

## HOW LONG BEFORE ILLNESS DEVELOPS?

This can vary depending on the cause: bacterial, viral or allergic.

## HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Bacterial and viral pinkeye are extremely contagious. Pinkeye is spread through eye-to-hand and hand-to-eye contact. Have the child wash his hands frequently. Allergic pinkeye is not contagious and tends to disappear on its own once the irritant is removed.

## WHEN IS THE CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?

This depends on the cause, but can be up to two weeks.

## WHEN CAN THE CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL?

Pinkeye with a clear discharge should not prevent the child from attending school. For pinkeye with a white or colored discharge, the child's doctor will recommend when he can return to school.

## WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

A diagnosis should always be made by the child's doctor.

**Bacterial pinkeye** is treated with antibiotic eye drops or ointment. Use drops or ointment only as directed. Never share medicine because infection may spread.

**Viral pinkeye** typically has no treatment and will usually clear up on its own. The child's doctor may discuss treatment for viral pinkeye.

**Allergic pinkeye** will disappear on its own once the irritant is removed.

## WAYS YOU CAN HELP

- Use a warm, damp washcloth to clear eyes that are sealed due to drainage.
- Warm, damp washcloths also may be used to relieve eye pain.
- Help relieve itchy eyes with a cool, damp washcloth.
- Use a clean washcloth each time.

## HOW CAN WE AVOID SPREADING INFECTION?

- Keep the child's hands away from his eyes.
- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently, especially after applying medicine.
- Do not share an infected child's washcloth, towels or bed linens with others.
- Change and wash linens daily.

*This general healthcare information should not be used as a substitute or in place of contacting the child's healthcare provider. Visit [www.choa.org](http://www.choa.org) or call 404-250-KIDS to speak to a pediatric nurse if you need further assistance.*