

# **Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye) Information and Control Measures**

## **What is Conjunctivitis?**

Conjunctivitis, also called ‘pinkeye’, is redness or irritation of the conjunctivae, the membranes on the inner part of the eyelids and the membranes covering the whites of the eyes. Pinkeye may be highly contagious if caused by bacteria or viruses. Other causes such as allergy-provoking agents, irritants and toxic agents are not considered contagious. The cause must be determined by a **licensed healthcare provider**.

## **How is Conjunctivitis detected?**

	<b>Bacterial Conjunctivitis</b>	<b>Viral Conjunctivitis</b>	<b>Allergic Conjunctivitis</b>
<b>Signs and Symptoms</b>	Redness on white portion of eye and inflammation of lower eyelid	Redness on white portion of eye and inflammation of lower eyelid	Redness on white portion of eye and inflammation of lower eyelid
	Purulent discharge from eye	White, stringy discharge	Clear discharge
	Minimal or no itching	Minimal or no itching	Severe itching
	Moderate tearing	Profuse tearing	Profuse tearing
	Sudden onset	Sudden onset	Both eyes usually involved
	Sensitivity to light or burning	Sensitivity to light	Sensitivity to light
	Dried discharge on eyelashes upon awakening	Lymph node swelling in front of the ears	Personal and/or family history of allergies
		Pain	
		Gritty feeling	Gritty feeling
<b>Incubation Period</b>	24 – 72 hours	5 – 12 days	

## **How is Conjunctivitis spread?**

Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis can spread easily from one person to another by having direct contact with the discharge from the eye or upper respiratory tract (nose or mouth) of an infected person, by contaminated hands, clothing, or other articles.

## **Case Findings – Administrative Procedures for Conjunctivitis**

When a staff member suspects the presence of conjunctivitis the student should be referred to the school nurse.

- The school nurse should confirm the presence of suspected conjunctivitis.
- The school nurse should notify the parent or guardian and refer the student to their licensed healthcare provider.
- The school nurse should provide the parent/guardian with a copy of *Control Measures and Management Options for Conjunctivitis*.
- The school nurse should assist the student with proper washing of the hands with soap and water.
- If a student returns to school without treatment, the school nurse should notify parent/guardian to take the student home and follow the *Control Measures and Management Options for Conjunctivitis*.

### **Control Measures for Conjunctivitis**

- Hand washing and cleaning under the nails is very important.
- Educate students and family to minimize hand-to-eye contact.
- Students with bacterial or viral conjunctivitis will be excluded from school.
- Students with bacterial conjunctivitis may return to school 24 hours after antibiotics initiated.
- Students with viral conjunctivitis may return to school when eyes are "clear", no apparent redness and no drainage present or with a written note from a licensed health care provider.
- Students with allergic conjunctivitis are not excluded from school.

### **Management Options for Conjunctivitis**

- Isolate suspected cases of conjunctivitis as able.
- Recommend good hand washing and cleaning under the nails.
- Apply cool compresses for 20 minutes; if redness diminishes considerably, consider allergic conjunctivitis.
- Parent/guardian to take student to the doctor for suspected bacterial or viral conjunctivitis.
- Apply warm, moist face cloths to the eyes to remove dried discharge upon awakening and relieve pain. Use a clean face cloth each time.
- Thoroughly wash hands after medication administration
- Do not share personal items especially face cloths, towels, and pillowcases, including eye makeup applicators.
- Launder pillowcases, towels and clothing in hot water and laundry detergent.
- Discontinue use of contact lens until symptom free and contact lens are replaced or cleaned as recommended by the eye care provider.

### **References:**

American Optometric Association 01/2023 [Conjunctivitis \(pink eye\) | AOA](#)  
Centers for Disease Control 11/2021 [Pink Eye \(Conjunctivitis\) | CDC](#)  
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta 2022 [infectious-illness-poster-2022.pdf \(choa.org\)](#)  
MAYO Clinic 01/2023 [Pink eye \(conjunctivitis\) - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)