

# FACTS ABOUT CONJUNCTIVITIS “PINK EYE”

## UConn Student Health Services



### What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the mucous membranes that line the eyelids and white part of the eye. When these membranes become inflamed, the eye appears reddened, hence the term pink eye.

### What causes Conjunctivitis?

There are different causes of conjunctivitis. Common causes are:

- **Bacterial Infection:** A common cause of pink eye seen in all ages, any time of year. Common organisms are Staphylococcus and Streptococcus.
- **Viral Infection:** Also common, caused by a variety of viruses and often accompanies cold symptoms.
- **Allergic or Irritant Reaction:** Occurs in both eyes. Allergic reactions are seen more frequently in Spring and Summer months due to seasonal allergens. Other causative agents may include dust, smoke, wind, air pollution, swimming pool water, and intense lights, (e.g., from sunlamps or reflection from snow).

### What are the symptoms of Pink Eye?

Some symptoms include:

- Drainage from the inner tear duct which may be clear or yellow or thick.
- Crusting of eyelashes, lashes stick together upon awakening.
- Redness and bloodshot appearance most apparent on the white of the eye.
- Swelling of the eyelids.
- Itching, smarting, burning of the eyes or sensitivity to light.



### How is Conjunctivitis treated?

Treatment depends on the cause. Compresses, warm or cold, several times daily and good hygiene are important components of treatment and containment of infection.



Antibiotic ointment or solution may be prescribed for an infection and should be used as directed. Allergic reactions are soothed by cool compresses and occasionally medications may be helpful. Both viral and bacterial conjunctivitis are self-limiting infections and usually resolve within 1-2 weeks.

### Self-Care Tips:

- Warm compresses 10-15 minutes, 3-4 times a day
- Frequent hand washing—every time you think you touched your eyes.
- Do not use contact lenses until the inflammation has subsided. If you use prescribed eye medication, wait at least 24 hours after completion before resuming contact lens use.
- Avoid rubbing eyes.
- Use a separate washcloth and towel for the affected eye and change your pillow case frequently.
- Eye make-up should not be used during inflammation and should be discarded if contaminated. It can be a common cause of reinfection. Do not share cosmetics.
- See your health care provider if you experience:



- \* *Increased sensitivity to light*
- \* *Eye pain*
- \* *Change in vision or partial loss of vision*
- \* *Excessive drainage*
- \* *If symptoms persist without improvement*

### Health Care provider's Special Instructions:

For answers to more specific questions call the Advice Nurse at 486-3427 or to make an appointment call 486-2719.