

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) is a highly contagious viral or bacterial infection affecting the eye. Conjunctivitis is characterized by swelling and pink or red color in the conjunctiva, the thin layer that lines the white part of the eye.

Bacterial conjunctivitis is characterized by a discharge of pus from the eye and may be accompanied by an ear infection. Viral conjunctivitis is often associated with widespread outbreaks and is usually characterized by a watery, rather than thick, discharge from the eye.

Transmission

Conjunctivitis is most commonly spread by personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands, or touching an object or surface with germs on it, then touching the eyes. **Both forms of conjunctivitis are highly contagious.**

Prevention

The best way to prevent the spread of conjunctivitis is by frequent hand washing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer. Avoid touching the eyes with unwashed hands.

Do not share personal objects, such as towels, bedding or eye glasses that come in close contact with secretions and body fluids. **People with conjunctivitis can become contagious before the start of symptoms and may remain contagious up to 2 weeks after, especially when it is viral.**

If You Have Conjunctivitis

Persons with conjunctivitis should wash hands frequently especially after applying eye drops or ointment to affected eye(s). Wash bed linens and towels in hot water and detergent after use.

Stop wearing contact lenses and makeup, and do not use pools or other shared aquatic spaces at least until the symptoms have resolved.

Treatment

Viral conjunctivitis will usually clear up on its own in 7 to 14 days, but can take 2 to 3 weeks or more to resolve.

Bacterial conjunctivitis can be treated with antibiotics. The infection should clear within several days of the beginning of treatment.