

PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES OF NYC

Conjunctivitis (Pink-eye)

Conjunctivitis is commonly known as pink eye. The two terms are synonymous.

Not all conjunctivitis requires eye drops. Conjunctivitis can be viral, allergic, irritant or bacterial. Only bacterial conjunctivitis requires antibiotic drops.

The conjunctiva is the membrane that covers the white of the eye. This area and the inner eyelids become pink or red when infected or irritated. Conjunctivitis can also cause increased tearing and swelling of the eyelids in conjunction with redness of the conjunctiva.

Viral conjunctivitis (part of a common cold) is the #1 cause of pink eye with or without discharge. It usually goes away on its own without antibiotic eye drops in less than a week.

Bacterial conjunctivitis usually involves the eyelids and eye discharge that looks like pus. Bacterial conjunctivitis can be treated with antibiotic eye drops. You can use warm compresses and call during office hours for further advice if you suspect a bacterial infection.

Allergic conjunctivitis is caused by environmental pollen. It is usually itchy and occurs in conjunction with sneezing and clear nasal discharge. For itchy, red, watering eyes, try an over the counter eye drop called Zaditor. If that does not work there are prescription eye drops available. Please call during regular office hours to discuss.

If your child is suffering from seasonal allergies, including allergic conjunctivitis, one way to ease their symptoms is to make sure they wash their hands and face, and wet down their hair when coming indoors. This will decrease the pollens in your home that may continue to aggravate your child's symptoms. Once home for the night, he or she should take a bath or shower and put clean clothes on.

Irritant conjunctivitis results from sunscreen, soap, chlorinated pool water, or smoke. Irritants can also be transferred by touching the eye with dirty fingers (e.g., food or plant resins). Flush the eye gently with clean water to relieve any discomfort.

Call the office for:

- 1) Eye discharge and redness in a newborn
- 2) Eye discharge associated with ear pain
- 3) Eyelid redness (that is spreading) and swelling involving one eye with or without fever
- 4) Suspected foreign body/debris in the eye
- 5) Eye pain or blurred vision