

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINK EYE)

Accompanying: Hand Washing Fact Sheet

What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is most commonly caused by viruses or bacteria, and is highly contagious. It is often referred to as “pink eye”.

What are the signs and symptoms of a Conjunctivitis infection?

Conjunctivitis begins with excess tearing and irritation of the eye, usually causing the whites of the eyes to appear pink or red in color. It is followed by swelling of the eyelids, photophobia (light sensitivity), and green or yellow discharge (pus or crusty eyes).

How are Conjunctivitis infections spread?

Pink eye is spread through contact with discharge from: the eyes, upper respiratory tracts of infected persons, contaminated fingers, clothing, and other objects including shared makeup applicators that come in contact with the eye. It is easily spread by contaminated hands.

What is the incubation period of Conjunctivitis and how long is it contagious?

The incubation period for pink eye is 24 to 72 hours and the infection is communicable throughout the course of the active infection. Depending on the type of pink eye infection (bacterial or viral), the infection can last anywhere from 3 to 5 days for bacterial cases, and 7 to 14 days in complicated viral cases.

What should I do if I think I have a Conjunctivitis infection?

Children experiencing symptoms should be excluded from daycare and school until examined by a physician and are approved for readmission by the school nurse following treatment (Pediatric Red Book).

How can I prevent myself and others from getting a Conjunctivitis infection?

Frequent and thorough hand washing, as outlined in the accompanying fact sheet, is recommended to prevent contamination of surfaces and spread of pink eye. It is also recommended to avoid touching or rubbing of the eyes, sharing of contact lenses, containers, or makeup, and to wash pillowcases, sheets, and towels in hot water and detergent.

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Orange County Epidemiology Program at 407-858-1420. You may also visit the Epidemiology Program website, <http://orchd.com/generalHealth/epidemiology/index.asp>, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, <http://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/index.html>, or the DOH-Orange School Health website at <http://orchd.com/personalHealth/schoolHealth/index.asp> for additional information.

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