

PINK-EYE (conjunctivitis)

Incubation, Signs and Symptoms

Incubation Period: Viral: varies from 12 hours to 12 days. Bacterial: 24-72 hours.

Signs and Symptoms: Redness of eye(s), watery, white or yellow discharge from the eye, matted eyelashes, burning or itching eyes.

Methods of Transmission

Contact with discharges from the eyes or upper respiratory tract of an infected person. Eyes can become infected from contaminated fingers, clothing and other articles, including shared towels or eye makeup.

Minimum Control Measures

Communicable Period: During the course of active infection. Bacterial: May last from 2-3 days to 2-3 weeks. Viral: up to 2-3 weeks.

Control: **Isolate child with eye discharge. EXCLUDE the child from attendance until examined by a physician and the child is approved for readmission.** For bacterial infections, this is normally 24 hours after treatment is started by the physician. Conjunctivitis caused by viruses is not shortened by antibiotic treatment and may be contagious until the watery, white or yellow discharge has ceased. Exclusion for long periods is often impractical. **Thorough hand washing and disinfection of contaminated articles will help to prevent spread. Eliminate shared articles, such as common towels.** Do not share eye makeup or eye drops.

Other Information

Distinguishing between viral and bacterial conjunctivitis requires costly laboratory tests. Many physicians treat all cases with antibiotics in order to prevent serious complications. Encourage children not to rub their eyes. Exclusion of the child with pink-eye and good Hand washing practices help to prevent the spread in day care/school situations.