

Conjunctivitis

(Pink Eye)

Clinical Description:

Conjunctivitis, or pink eye, is an acute condition characterized by redness of the eye(s). Other symptoms can include tearing, irritation, and photophobia, which may be followed by swelling of the lids and/or a purulent discharge. Viral and bacterial infections, foreign bodies or allergies may cause the condition.

Incubation Period:

For bacterial conjunctivitis, the incubation period ranges from 24 - 72 hours, and for viral conjunctivitis, the incubation period is usually 12 hours - 3 days.

Mode of Transmission:

Contact with discharge from conjunctivae or upper respiratory tracts of infected persons; also contaminated fingers, clothing, and other articles, especially those coming in close contact with the eyes (i.e. make-up applicators, multiple dose eye medication applicators).

Period of Communicability:

A person can spread conjunctivitis during the course of active infection. Depending upon the cause of the infection, communicability may be up to 14 days after onset.

Exclusion/Reporting:

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that children with purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow discharge, often with matted eyelids after sleep and eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eyes) be excluded until examined by a health care provider and approved for readmission. Similar guidance would be appropriate for staff as well. With bacterial conjunctivitis, health care providers usually recommend exclusion until 24 hours after starting topical antibiotic therapy.

Prevention/Care:

- Use of hot or cold moist packs may relieve discomfort
- Encourage frequent hand-washing and prompt disposal of used tissues
- Refer for medical evaluation

Outbreaks:

According to the ISDH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.3) the definition of an outbreak means cases of disease occurring in a community, region, or particular population at a rate in excess of that which is normally expected. The local health department should be notified of suspected and/or documented cases of conjunctivitis if the number of cases is in excess of what is normally experienced in your school or occur with a common connection (same class, sports team, etc.). For additional information and recommendations regarding the preparation for, and the management of an outbreak situation in a school setting, see Appendix A, "Managing an Infectious Disease Outbreak In a School Setting."

Other Resources:

Indiana State Department of Health Quick Facts Page (found on disease/condition page):

<http://bit.ly/12JLfD>

Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/pink-eye/DS00258>