

# Pink Eye

Pink Eye, also known as conjunctivitis, is a very common eye condition in which the normally clear mucus membrane that lines the eyelid and eye surface, known as the conjunctiva, becomes swollen and red or pinkish in color.

Most cases of pink eye are caused by viral or bacterial infections, dry eyes from lack of tears or exposure to the elements, chemicals or smoke, or allergies.

Pink eye caused by viruses or bacteria is highly contagious, and keeping it from spreading is extremely important. This is especially true since there is usually no medical treatment, and waiting it out is the only way to be rid of it. Viral and bacterial pink eye is the leading type and is most often spread through poor hand washing or sharing an object like a washcloth or towel with someone that has pink eye.

With viral and bacterial pink eye, one should expect swelling and itching of the eyelids, watery eyes and clear or slightly thick drainage. This drainage may also cause the eyelids to stick together when a person first wakes up in the morning or after a nap.

This type of pink eye usually runs its course over 5 to 7 days, but has been known to sometimes last as much as 3 weeks and may become ongoing or chronic. A person is usually able to return to work or school as symptoms begin to fade.

Other types of pink eye, caused by non-bacterial and non-viral irritants usually don't last as long and fade more quickly, with fewer symptoms.

If you have pink eye, there are a number of steps you can take to prevent spreading it:

- Wash your hands before or after touching the eyes or face.
- Do not share eye makeup
- Do not wear eye makeup while still suffering from pink eye, since you run the risk of re-infecting yourself.
- Do not wear contact lenses while still infected, since you may make the infection worse or re-infect yourself.

- Do not share towels, linens, pillows, or handkerchiefs. Use clean linens, towels, and washcloths daily.
- When cleaning drainage out from your eye, always clean from inside, toward your nose, to the outside, toward your cheek.

Fortunately, pink eye is not a serious illness, and patience and a bit of caution is all you require, in most cases, to get through it. For more information, contact your eye doctor today.