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## **CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINKEYE)**

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### **What is pinkeye?**

Pinkeye, also called conjunctivitis, is an infection of the covering of the eyeball and inside of the eyelid. It is caused by bacterial or viral infections or by allergic reactions to dust, pollen or other materials.

### **What are the symptoms?**

People with pinkeye often experience an itchy or 'gritty' feeling in their eyes as well as pain or burning. The infection turns the whites of the eyes pink or red. The person may have a lot of tears and pus/discharge. When the person wakes up after sleep, pus or discharge often causes the eyelids to stick together. Symptoms will develop within 24-72 hours after being exposed to conjunctivitis.

### **How is it spread?**

The germs that cause conjunctivitis may be present in nasal secretions as well as in the discharge from the eyes. People can become infected when their hands become contaminated with these materials and they rub their eyes. Conjunctivitis can be spread to others for the duration of the infection or, if the infection is bacterial, it can be spread until 24 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment. Pinkeye is easily spread when:

- a person with the infection touches the discharge and then touches someone else
- an uninfected person touches the discharge of an infected person and then touches their own eyes
- an adult wipes an infected child's eyes and then touches their own eyes or another person's eyes
- a person uses contaminated towels or eye make-up

### **What is the treatment?**

Pinkeye that is caused by bacteria can be treated and cured with an antibiotic. Antibiotics can also stop the infection from spreading to others. There is no treatment for pinkeye that is caused by a virus.

# — *Health & Environment Facts* —

## **How can I prevent it?**

- Ensure you, and your child, wash your hands very carefully after touching or wiping the child's eyes
- Do not share towels or washcloths
- Do not share eye make-up
- Children need to be excluded from school or childcare facilities until they have been treated with an antibiotic for at least 24 hours or have been examined by a physician and approved for readmission without treatment

For more information please call Public Health at 519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456.