

Conjunctivitis

Single
Point
Lesson

Conjunctivitis is a common condition that causes redness and inflammation of the thin layer of tissue that covers the front of the eye (the conjunctiva).

What causes conjunctivitis?

Infective conjunctivitis is caused by a bacterial or viral infection

Allergic conjunctivitis is caused by an allergic reaction to a substance such as pollen or dust mites. Allergic conjunctivitis can affect daily life and can make children very miserable particularly if your eyes are severely irritated.

Irritant conjunctivitis occurs when the eye comes into contact with things that can irritate the conjunctiva, such as shampoo or chlorinated water, or a loose eyelash rubbing against the eye



Treating conjunctivitis

The treatment will depend on the cause. Infective conjunctivitis may need antibiotic eye drops to clear up the infection.

Irritant conjunctivitis will clear up as soon as whatever is causing it is removed.

Allergic conjunctivitis can usually be treated with anti-allergy medications such as [antihistamines](#). If possible, care should be taken to avoid the substance that triggered the allergy.

The two main symptoms are usually:

- eye redness – as a result of the inflammation and widening of the tiny blood vessels in the conjunctiva.
- a discharge –the conjunctiva contains thousands of cells that produce mucus and tiny glands that produce tears and inflammation will cause the produce more water and mucus

Often affected one eye first and then spreads to the second eye.

Infective Conjunctivitis may be accompanied by

- a burning sensation in your eyes
- a feeling of grit in your eyes
- a sticky coating on the eyelashes – especially visible first thing in the morning.
- an enlarged lymph node (gland) in front of the ear

Infection Control advice

Children do not need to stay away from nursery/ school if they have conjunctivitis, unless they are feeling particularly unwell. If there are a number of conjunctivitis cases at school/ nursery, please contact the infection control team on **01744 457314/312** to discuss. Wash your hands regularly – this is particularly important and will stop the infection spreading to others. Encourage children with hand washing particularly if they have been touching their eyes. If you need to clean sticky discharge from eyelids and lashes, wearing gloves use cotton wool soaked in cooled boiled water. Avoid sharing pillows or towels always.