

Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child may have been exposed to **pinkeye (conjunctivitis)** while at preschool.

What is pinkeye?

Pinkeye is the inflammation (redness, swelling) of the outer layer of the eye and lining of the eyelid. There are several causes of pinkeye. Sometimes it is caused by viruses and bacteria that can be spread from person to person. Allergic and chemical pinkeye are caused by irritation and are not contagious.

What are the symptoms of pinkeye?

A person with pinkeye has redness in one or both eyes with draining fluid. The fluid may be clear and watery (like tears) or thicker white or yellow pus. The eyelids may be matted together after sleep. Sometimes the eyes are itchy or painful. Some viruses and bacteria that cause pinkeye also cause fever, cough, and ear infections.

How serious is pinkeye?

Viral and bacterial pinkeye usually go away on their own after a few days, and very rarely lead to serious eye damage. Just to be safe, a person with pinkeye should always be evaluated by a health care provider.

How does a person get pinkeye?

Pinkeye from viruses and bacteria is easily spread by contact with fluid from the eyes, nose, and mouth of an infected person. This can be through person-to-person contact, or through contact with a contaminated toy or other object.

How long does it take to come down with pinkeye after a person is exposed?

The amount of time between being exposed to pinkeye and showing symptoms varies depending on the cause.

When is a person with pinkeye contagious?

Bacterial pinkeye is contagious until 24 hours after antibiotics are started or symptoms are gone. Viral pinkeye is contagious until the eye redness and drainage are gone.

How can I prevent my child or others from coming down with pinkeye?

- Wash hands well and frequently, especially after wiping the eyes or nose or being in contact with someone with pinkeye.
- Cover coughs and sneezes and put used tissues into a trash can.
- Avoid unnecessarily touching eyes
- Prevent sharing of food, drinks, and other items that may touch the mouth, such as eating utensils, toothbrushes, or towels.
- Wash dishes and utensils thoroughly in hot soapy water or a dishwasher.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize toys that touch the mouth of a child before use by another child.

What is the treatment for pinkeye?

A person with pinkeye should always be evaluated by a health care provider. Bacterial pinkeye is treated with antibiotic ointment, eye drops, or sometimes oral antibiotics for children who also have ear infections. Viral pinkeye has no treatment.

If my child develops pinkeye, must he/she stay away from child care?

Yes, unless the pinkeye is due to allergy or chemical irritation. In general, children with infectious pinkeye must stay out of child care until the eye is no longer draining. If your healthcare provider has diagnosed bacterial pinkeye, the child can return to preschool after taking antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

