

Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the tissue that lines the inside of the eyelids. There are many different types and causes of conjunctivitis. Infectious conjunctivitis is caused by bacteria or viruses. Non-infectious conjunctivitis can be caused by allergies or irritation.

Conjunctivitis is usually a relatively minor condition which resolves without treatment after 5 – 14 days, depending on the cause.

Check if you have conjunctivitis

Symptoms of conjunctivitis include:

- Red irritated eye(s)
- Grittiness and discomfort in the eye(s)
- Sticky mucous/ discharge from the eye(s)
- Light sensitivity
- You should not have any change in your vision.

Treating conjunctivitis yourself

You can often treat mild conjunctivitis without seeing a GP by:

- Avoiding rubbing the eyes
- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water before touching the eye
- Stopping wearing contact lenses while you have conjunctivitis
- Using separate towels to others to avoid spread
- Avoiding close contact with others during the contagious period (up to approximately 7 days after onset of symptoms)
- Applying a cold compress and/ or refrigerated artificial tears drops to relieve irritation. Artificial tears are available without a prescription in pharmacies.
- Washing the eye with a saline eye bath or cooled, boiled water. Eye baths are available without a prescription in pharmacies.
- Using sterile eye wipes or cotton wool dipped in cool, boiled water to wipe the eye clean. Sterile eye wipes are available without a prescription in pharmacies
- Applying Brolene® Eye Drops/ Brolene® Eye Ointment/ Golden Eye® Eye Ointment. They are antibacterial drops which are available in pharmacies without a prescription. They are useful if your conjunctivitis is caused by bacteria
- Applying anti-histamine drops if your conjunctivitis is caused by allergies such as hay fever
- If your conjunctivitis is caused by allergies such as hay fever, wearing wraparound sunglasses can help protect the eye.

How a pharmacist can help with conjunctivitis

A pharmacist can advise you about medicines that can help. They can help you to determine if your conjunctivitis may be contagious or not.

They can also advise the best:

- Eye drops
- Eye ointments
- Eye wipes

- Eye baths

To help with your symptoms

When to see a GP

See a GP if:

- Your symptoms are severe
- You have pain in the eye
- You have changes in your vision
- Your symptoms don't improve after a week
- You keep getting conjunctivitis
- The person with conjunctivitis is less than one month old

Treatment for conjunctivitis from a GP

Your GP may be able to recommend other medicines to help with your symptoms such as:

- Antibiotic eye drops
- Antibiotic eye ointments
- Antihistamine eye drops
- Steroid eye drops
- Antiviral tablets

Your GP may also take a sample from the eye mucous to test it to find out the cause of your conjunctivitis. Your GP may also refer you to an eye specialist if:

- Your symptoms are very severe
- Your symptoms do not get better with treatment
- Your symptoms come back very often