

Pinkeye

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

What is pinkeye?

Pinkeye (conjunctivitis) is an eye condition caused by bacteria, a virus, an allergic reaction or chemicals. If it is caused by a bacteria or virus, it is very contagious (can spread easily). It is not contagious if an allergic reaction or chemicals cause it.

NOTE: Babies less than 8 weeks old must be seen by their doctor for any eye redness, swelling and drainage.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of these symptoms:

- Watery eyes
- Itchy eyes
- Redness in the whites of the eyes
- Puffy eyelids
- Drainage from the eyes that may be yellow or green
- Eyes may be crusted shut with dried drainage after sleeping

Your child may also have a cold with a fever, runny nose and congestion.

What is the treatment?

Some general guidelines to follow include:

- If the eye drainage and crusting bothers your child, gently remove it with a warm washcloth or cotton ball. Use a fresh cloth or cotton ball for each eye.
- Wipe from the inside corner of the eye (near the nose) to the outside.
- **If your child wears contact lenses, switch to eyeglasses until the eyes are better.**
- If your child needs it, the doctor may order medicine to be put in the eye or to be taken by mouth.
- Do not share eye drops or ointment between family members unless the doctor says you can.
- Your child may return to school or day care as the doctor directs or as his school permits.

How do I put in the eye drops?

1. Wash your hands well for 20 seconds before and after using eye drops.
2. Lay your child down, or tip his head back.
3. Gently pull the lower eyelid down, and put the eye drops in the "pocket" formed.
4. Be careful not to touch the tip of the medicine dropper to the eye.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Pinkeye, continued

How do I put in the eye ointment?

1. Wash your hands well for 20 seconds before and after using ointment.
2. Lay your child down, or tip his head back.
3. Gently pull the lower eyelid down, and place a thin line of ointment along the length of the lower lid.
Ointment will cause blurred vision for a short time.
4. Be careful not to touch the tip of the medicine tube to the eye.

How can I prevent the spread of infection?

- Wash your hands often, especially before and after touching your child's eyes. Teach your child to do the same.
- Do not share towels, pillows or washcloths with others.
- Wash bed linens in hot water.

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor if your child:

- Is not better after 24 hours on the medicine.
- Has more swelling or redness of the eyes.
- Has more redness of the skin around the eyes, including the eyelids.
- Has moderate to severe pain around or behind the eye.
- Has a fever (temperature over 100.3°F).
- Has headache, nausea or vomiting.
- Has blurred vision, except for the short time after the eye ointment is applied.
- Is sensitive to light.

Also, call if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.