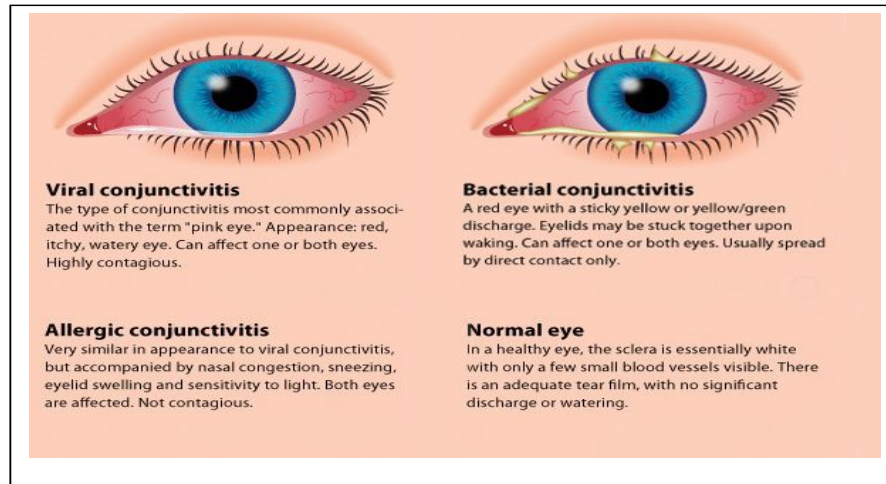


## Conjunctivitis (Allergic)

### What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is usually an infection or inflammation of the outer layer of the eye (or the conjunctiva). It can occur if you have a cold or have been near someone with a cold. Conjunctivitis is not usually serious, but it can affect both eyes and can be passed from person to person. Conjunctivitis is sometimes referred to as 'pink' or 'red' eye.



There are three forms of conjunctivitis:

- Bacterial
- Viral
- Allergic

This leaflet looks at allergic conjunctivitis. If you are experiencing bacterial or viral conjunctivitis, we have produced a separate leaflet.

### What are the symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis?

Allergic conjunctivitis usually causes pink or red itchy eyes. The eyes are normally watery and other allergy symptoms such as sneezing, and a runny nose may be present. These are part of the body's defence mechanism to things it sees as foreign and harmful.

The seasonal type of allergic conjunctivitis will vary with the time of year and weather conditions. Those with more general allergies, such as an allergy to dust mites, animals, etc; will most likely to have symptoms throughout the year.

Other symptoms include:

- Both eyes are usually affected, and symptoms develop quickly
- The skin on the inside of the eyelids looks red and sore
- A burning feeling may occur, although the eyes are not usually painful
- The eyelids tend to swell

## Risk factors associated with Allergic Conjunctivitis?

Allergic conjunctivitis is commonly caused by sensitivity to grass and tree pollen, dust mites or animals. It is far more common in those with a history of allergies or those who have a family history of allergies.

## Treatment

There are a range of medicines that may help with allergic conjunctivitis. They include:

### Mast-cell stabiliser eye drops

These do not work straight away, as they take a few days to start to work. These drops are good if you know when you are likely to develop an allergy and so you can use them to prevent symptoms from occurring. Mast cells are a type of white blood cells which are part of the immune system.

### Antihistamine eye drops

These drops provide a more immediate effect. They won't prevent an allergic reaction, but instead treat the symptoms once the allergy has started.

### Antihistamine Tablets

The tablets work in the same way as the eye drops, but also treat other allergy symptoms such as a runny nose and sneezing that is caused by the allergy.

If you have allergic conjunctivitis, please visit your local pharmacist for advice. Mast-cell stabiliser eye drops, antihistamine eye drops and antihistamine tablets are all available over the counter at your pharmacy if they have been recommended to you.

## The do's and don'ts while you have allergic conjunctivitis:

### Don't:

- Don't wear your contact lenses (if the symptoms are severe or if your cornea is affected), until your eyes are better and after 24 hours after the last dose of ointment/drops (if they were required)
- Do not rub your eyes (this will make the symptoms worse)
- Do not wear eye make-up

### Do:

- Wash hands regularly with warm soapy water
- Bathing the eyes with a flannel soaked in cold water or with an over-the-counter 'eye bath' may ease symptoms
- Avoid the cause of the allergy (if possible)
- Wear sunglasses or glasses as they may help to shield your eyes from pollen

## When to seek advice?

In most cases, you may not need to return for a further check-up. However if your sight becomes:

- More blurred over time, changes in your vision, like wavy lines or flashing
- If the pain and redness are getting a lot worse
- The light starts to hurt your eyes (photophobia)
- Intense redness in 1 eye or both eyes

Please refer to the 'What should I do if I have a problem?'

## What should I do if I have a problem?

If you develop any of the symptoms featured in this leaflet, or need urgent advice about your eye(s), please telephone (in the information please provide your hospital 'X' number (if known), Name, Date of Birth and a contact telephone number):

- Main telephone number: 0300 131 4500
- Eastbourne Eye Clinic – Ext: 771744 during 9am to 5pm (answerphone)

For Out of Hours contact you may leave an answerphone message on the telephone numbers above, and a member of staff will contact you the next working day. Otherwise, if you feel you need to be seen urgently, please attend your local Accident and Emergency Department.

## Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

## Sources of information

Association of Optometrists 2017. Allergic conjunctivitis (accessed on 16/07/2019 via [www.aop.org.uk/patients](http://www.aop.org.uk/patients))

Moorfields Rye Hospital. 2018. Conjunctivitis (accessed on 05/11/2018 via [www.moorfields.nhs.uk/condition/conjunctivitis](http://www.moorfields.nhs.uk/condition/conjunctivitis))

NHS. 2018. Conjunctivitis (accessed on 16/07/2019 via [www.nhs.uk/conditions/conjunctivitis/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/conjunctivitis/))

NHS University Hospital Southampton. 2016. Conjunctivitis - (accessed on 05/11/2018 via [www.uhs.nhs.uk](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk))

## Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net).

## Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:  
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