

# PINK EYE

## PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

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### **What is Pink eye?**

*Pink eye is an inflammation or infection of the transparent membrane (conjunctiva) that lines the eyelid and part of the eyeball. The cause of pink eye is commonly a bacterial or viral infection or an allergic reaction.*

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### **How is it spread?**

Pink eye is transmitted through contact with eye or upper respiratory discharges of an infected person. It can also be transmitted through contaminated fingers, clothing and other articles. Pink eye is also easily transmitted from a persons infected eye to their uninfected eye. Symptoms occur 1-3 days after exposure.

### **How is it treated?**

See your doctor for early diagnosis and treatment.

Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic eye drops or an eye ointment for a bacterial infection. An improvement of signs and symptoms should be noticed within one or two days. It is important to use the medication the entire time your doctor prescribes it, in order to prevent recurrence of the infection. Viral conjunctivitis should not be treated with antibiotics. Like a common cold, the virus has to run its course. Symptoms may worsen in the first few days and then gradually clear on their own.

### **How can we prevent Pink eye?**

- Keep hands/fingers away from eyes. Use a tissue to clean them.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after eye contact.
- Use separate towels and washcloths for each person in the home and change them daily. Launder in hot soapy water.
- Use a wet wash cloth to soften eye drainage when cleaning eyes.
- Children attending school or day care should be kept at home for at least 24 hours after the start of treatment.

### **SYMPTOMS OF PINK EYE**

- Red and swollen eyelids
- Pain or itching in the eyes
- Thick yellow drainage from the eyes
- Blurred vision and sensitivity to light
- Watery eyes
- Gritty feeling in one or both eyes

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