



Dr Kaye McMullan gives us the facts about Pink Eye

Conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye, is a common eye problem in children. It is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, which is the clear membrane that covers the white part of the eye and inner eyelids.

Causes

It can be caused by infection, either viral or bacterial, which is highly contagious, or by an allergy which is not contagious. Infectious conjunctivitis is passed from person to person by contact with the discharge from the eyes, secretions from the nose or throat through touch, coughing or sneezing, contaminated fingers or objects and contact with contaminated towels and bedding. A person with conjunctivitis is contagious for as long as there is discharge from their eyes.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms usually develop within 24-72 hours of becoming infected and can last from 3 days to 3 weeks. It is not always clear which type of conjunctivitis is present because they all cause redness, swelling and discharge from the eyes. The eyelids can appear puffy and when the discharge dries it can cause a crust on the eyelids. Bacterial conjunctivitis may start in just one eye but can spread to the other. It causes a gritty feeling and a purulent discharge. Viral conjunctivitis almost always involves both eyes and causes red, itchy eyes with a 'weepy' discharge. Allergic conjunctivitis often has other signs of hay fever which include an itchy, runny nose, sneezing and history of allergy. The eyes are usually itchy and watery.

Treatment

Bacterial conjunctivitis often requires antibiotic ointment or drops to be prescribed by a doctor. It should be applied to both eyes even if only one eye is infected. Viral conjunctivitis will get better on its own and only requires gentle cleaning of the eyes with cotton balls soaked in warm water. Clean in one direction only and discard the cotton ball each time to prevent recontamination. Allergic conjunctivitis can be treated with medications used to treat hay fever such as anti histamines. There are also eye drops available from your doctor to ease the discomfort if only the eyes are affected.

See your doctor urgently if you or your child has severe eye pain, problems with vision or are generally unwell and have a fever.



Dr Kaye McMullan is a graduate from The University of Western Australia. She is based at IMC Katong and has a special interest in Children's Health, Chronic Disease Management, Contraception & Family Planning.

If you would like an appointment please call: 6342 4440 or book online: <https://www.imc-healthcare.com/appointments/>