

What is conjunctivitis?

It is the most common eye inflammation. The most common causes of acute conjunctivitis are bacteria, viruses, allergens, or sometimes irritation from toxic chemical exposures.

Who is at risk?

Anyone! It is most commonly found in children < 5 years of age.

What are the symptoms of conjunctivitis?

The onset is sudden with redness of white-colored area of the eyeball and edema or swelling of the lids, secretions that contain mucus and pus, pain, blurred vision, sensitivity to light and occasionally low-grade fever, headache, tiredness and tenderness in the area surrounding the eye(s).

How do you get conjunctivitis?

Contact with the discharges from the eye or upper respiratory tracts of infected people, from fingers, clothing and other articles, including shared towels, eye-makeup applicators, multiple dose eye medications soiled with discharges and inadequately sterilized eye examination instruments.

How is conjunctivitis diagnosed?

Drainage from the eye can be tested to determine the cause.

How is conjunctivitis treated?

Most types of mild bacterial conjunctivitis and most types of viral conjunctivitis are usually time-limited conditions that require no treatment. Some infections may be treated with eye ointments or drops with a doctor's prescription.

How can conjunctivitis be prevented?

It can be prevented through personal cleanliness, including frequent handwashing. When washing hands at school or work use paper towels after washing, or the hot air blower. At home, provide a separate towel and face cloth for each member of the household, and wash towels regularly in hot water and detergent. Try not to touch eyes while infected. Do not use common eyedropper, eye medicines, or eye makeup. Make tissues readily available at work or in school classrooms; dispose of them in a trash receptacle after use. Use disposable tissues to blow your nose, sneeze, or cough.

Should infected persons be excluded from school or work?

Conjunctivitis is usually seen with viral upper respiratory and intestinal infection. People with conjunctivitis caused by either bacteria or virus should wash their hands frequently and use good hand-washing technique. No one should use common towels or other toilet articles. People with acute stage conjunctivitis should consult their healthcare provider for treatment. Children should not attend school during the acute stage.