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## Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)

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### What is Pink Eye?

Pink eye is an infection of the covering of the eyeball, usually caused by a virus, but may be caused by bacteria. Children under 5 years of age are most often affected.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms of pink eye usually appear 2-3 days after becoming infected. Symptoms may include a scratchy feeling or pain in the affected eye, watery eyes, the whites of the eyes are pink or red, pus or a discharge from the eyes that can cause the eyelids to be stuck shut in the morning. If pink eye is caused by bacteria, pus will probably be present in the affected eye.

### Is it contagious?

Yes. Pink eye is easily spread from person to person. The infected eye's discharge spreads by getting on the hands of the person who has touched the infected eye. It is spread to others through hand-to-hand-to-eye contact. It can also be spread on the hands of adults who wipe the child's eyes and do not wash their hands. It can be spread during the course of active infection.

### What is recommended?

- Phone your family doctor if you think your child has pink eye. Since it is not easy to tell whether the infection is caused by bacteria or viruses, the child should be checked by a physician. It may be necessary to use antibiotics, usually in the form of eye drops or ointments
- If your child develops pink eye, check the other children as pink eye is very infectious
- Ensure the child or any other parent/guardian washes their hands very carefully after touching the child's infected eye.
- Do not share the child's towels with anyone, since the infection can be spread this way
- If only one eye is infected, avoid spread to the other eye by not using the same towel to wipe both eyes
- If the child experiences pus or discharge from the eye, he or she should not return to school until treatment has been started for one full day (24 hours)
- The child should not be allowed to use a swimming pool during the course of active infection