



# Pinkeye

## What is Pinkeye?

Pinkeye is an inflammation of the conjunctiva (the outermost layer of the eye and the inner surface of the eyelids). It is most commonly due to an infection (usually viral, but sometimes bacterial), an allergic reaction or as a result of a chemical eye injury.

## Symptoms of Pinkeye

Common symptoms in all forms of conjunctivitis includes red eye, irritation and watering of the eyes.

**Viral conjunctivitis** is often related to an infection of the upper respiratory tract, a common cold, and/or a sore throat. Its symptoms include watery discharge and variable itch. The infection usually begins with one eye, but may spread easily to the other eye.

**Bacterial conjunctivitis** is due a common pus-producing bacteria that causes irritation of the eye and a stringy, opaque, greyish or yellowish discharge that may cause the eyelids to stick together, especially after sleeping. There may also be severe crusting of the infected eye and the surrounding skin. The infection usually begins with one eye, but may spread easily to the other eye.

Pinkeye may be present for three days before symptoms appear.

Chemical eye injury is due to either an acidic or alkali substance getting in the eye. Mild burns will produce conjunctivitis while more severe burns may cause the cornea to turn white.

## Pinkeye spreads

Pinkeye is contagious if it is caused by a bacteria or virus. Pinkeye is spread by direct contact when the discharge from the infected eye is passed on with fingers, direct contact with face cloths, bedding and toys. An infected person may give pinkeye to another person two to three days before the symptoms appear. Be sure to watch your child for signs of pinkeye if another child has it.

## Preventing Pinkeye

There is no vaccine to prevent pinkeye. The most effective method of preventing pinkeye is frequent hand washing.

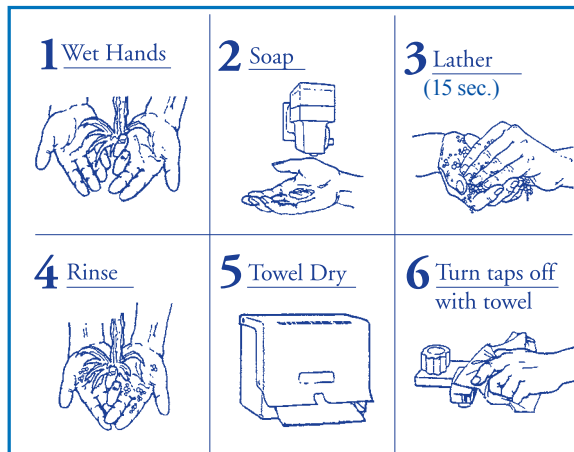
## Treating Pinkeye

Generally, pinkeye resolves on its own without treatment in two to five days. However, if it is caused by bacteria, and there is no improvement after three days, you may need antibiotics, eye drops or ointment. Antibiotics may also stop the infection from spreading to others. There is no treatment for pinkeye that is caused by a virus.

For further information, please call:  
**York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653**  
**TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)**

## Suspecting Pinkeye

- Contact your doctor. It is not easy to tell whether the infection is caused by a bacteria or a virus. It may be necessary for the doctor to prescribe antibiotics.
- It is very important to take all of the medication given by the doctor even when symptoms disappear.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after touching or wiping the affected eye.
- Do not share towels or washcloths with anyone else as this may spread the infection.
- Wash bed linens and washcloths daily until all redness and pus discharge has disappeared from the eyes.
- If the eyes have a pus discharge (yellow or thick), the affected person should not go to a child care facility, school or work until the medication has been taken for one full day and the doctor has re-checked their eyes.
- Avoid swimming until the eyes are healed.



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