



PINKEYE – Oh My, What is it?

Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis) is an eye condition that may have many different causes including **viruses, bacteria, or allergies**.

Who gets Pinkeye and what does it look like?

Pinkeye is most common in children under 5 years old, however anyone may get Pinkeye at any age.

Depending on what is causing the Pinkeye – a Virus, or a Bacterium, or an Allergen, the symptoms may be a little different.

Bacterial Conjunctivitis – is twice as common as viral conjunctivitis and would present with the following symptoms: Red or pink, itchy, painful eye or eyes; More than a tiny amount of green or yellow discharge; Infected eyes may be crusted shut after sleeping; May affect one or both eyes

Viral Conjunctivitis – is less common than bacterial conjunctivitis and usually (not always) occurs in an older school child. You may see the following symptoms: Pink, swollen, watering eyes sensitive to light; May affect only one eye

Allergic Conjunctivitis – common in children with a history of seasonal allergies and would present with the following symptoms: Itching, redness, excessive tearing, usually in both eyes

Can my child attend daycare if he or she has Pinkeye? No, your child must see a doctor and receive a diagnosis of which type of conjunctivitis he or she has and what type of treatment he or she is receiving, as well as a date that the child may return to the child care center. The doctor will determine when your child may return to the childcare center based on the type of Pinkeye your child has.

- 1) **Bacterial Pinkeye** – The contagious period ends when the course of medication is started. The child will be given antibiotic drops or ointment to be used in the infected eye.

- 2) **Viral Pinkeye** – The contagious period continues while the signs and symptoms are present. Because this type of Pinkeye is caused by a virus, not a bacterium, it cannot be treated with an antibiotic.
- 3) **Allergic Pinkeye** – There is no contagious period because the child is having an allergic reaction to an allergen in the environment. The reaction may be immediate or delayed for many hours or days after the contact.

How is Pinkeye spread?

Hands are the culprit again; hands may become contaminated by touching the discharge from the infected eye or by touching a washcloth, towel, or other item that may have come in contact with the secretions from the child's eyes.

Sometimes, it seems that Pinkeye spreads like wildfire – so how do you control it?

- 1) Children with signs & symptoms of Pinkeye should be sent home with a medical referral, unless you have an allergy statement from the doctor that states the child has allergic conjunctivitis and the eyes only have excessive tearing or clear discharge.
- 2) Careful hand washing before and after touching the eyes, nose, and mouth. We are quite careful about this in the childcare setting, so make sure you teach parents as well!
- 3) Careful sanitation of objects that are commonly touched by hands or faces – we have to think at the child's level here – doorknobs, tables, cots, toys, and teach parents not to share towels & washcloths at home with the child who has contagious pinkeye.

When should we worry at the childcare center that we may have an outbreak of Pinkeye and need to stop it fast?

If you have more than two children in your room with a Pinkeye infection at the same time – you should call the Health Specialist for your center.

If you have any questions about this article or other health issues please call me at 931-237-8427.

Healthy Regards,

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