

Pink Eye Fact Sheet

What is it?

Conjunctivitis, or "pink eye", is a condition that causes pain, redness and swelling in the eye. It can be caused by bacteria, viruses, allergens, or irritants, such as particulate matter. In the United States, **children miss 3 million days of school** every year because of pink eye.



How does it spread?

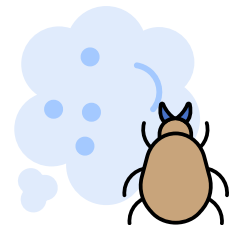
Pink eye can spread easily from person-to-person when it is caused by germs, virus or bacteria. These germs can spread from an infected person to you through:

- Close contact, like touching or shaking hands.
- The air when an infected person coughs or sneezes near you.
- Touching your eyes after touching an object or surface that was in contact with pink eye germs.



Pink eye caused by allergens and irritants cannot spread from person-to-person. You can get these types of pink eye when you are around:

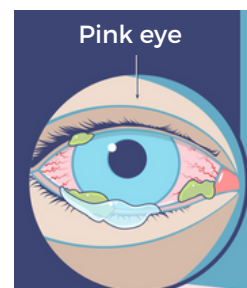
- Pollen
- Dust mites
- Animal dander
- Smoke
- Fumes
- Chemicals



How do I know if I have it?

You can get pink eye in one or both eyes. You can also get it more than one time. You may have pink eye if your eyes are:

- Red or swollen
- Watery
- Itching, hurting, or burning
- Crusty when you wake up
- Leaking pus or mucus



Pink eye may also feel like you have something in your eye.

How can I protect myself?

To protect yourself from bacterial or viral pink eye, you should:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes with unwashed hands.
- Avoid sharing things that touch your eyes, like pillows, makeup, and eye drops.
- Follow your eye doctor's advice on how to take care of your contacts.



You can prevent pink eye caused by allergens and irritants by staying away from things that irritate your eyes, like pollen or wildfire smoke.

How should I take care of myself or someone who has Pink Eye?

Pink eye can be treated with liquid eye drops called "artificial tears." You do not need a prescription from your doctor to get **these** eye drops. You can also use a compress to help with pain and swelling. However, if symptoms don't improve, see a doctor to decide if you need prescription eye drops. (See below for symptoms.) In any case, if you have pink eye:



- **Do not** use the same eye products for your infected and non-infected eyes.
- **Do not** wear contact lenses until your eye doctor says it's okay.

When should I call a doctor?

You should see a doctor if you have pink eye AND:

- Eye pain
- Light hurts your eyes
- Trouble seeing
- Very red eyes
- A weak immune system
- Symptoms don't improve or get worse



Newborns with pink eye should see a doctor right away.



To learn more, visit the Pink Eye webpage at www.cdc.gov.

