

# Eye Allergies

## What are eye allergies?

An eye allergy is an allergic reaction to some substance on the surface of the eye. With an eye allergy, your child will have:

- itchy eyes (your child may frequently rub them)
- increased tearing
- increased blinking of the eyes
- red or pink eyes (without pus)
- mild swelling of the eyelids.

## What is the cause?

Eye allergies that occur during the same season each year are caused by pollens. Allergies that are not seasonal may be caused by pets (for example, cats), feathers, perfumes, eye makeup, or another substance.

## How long does it last?

Most eye allergies caused by a pollen last 4 to 6 weeks, which is the length of most pollen seasons. If the allergic substance can be identified (for example, a cat) AND avoided, the symptoms will not return .

## How can I take care of my child?

- **Remove pollen** First wash the pollen off the face. Then use a clean washcloth and cool water to clean off the eyelids. (Tears will wash the pollen out of the eyes.) This rinse of the eyelids may need to be repeated every time your child comes in on a windy day. Pollen also collects in the hair and on exposed body surfaces. This pollen can easily be reintroduced into the eyes. Therefore, give your child a shower and shampoo every night before bedtime. Encourage your child not to touch his eyes unless his hands have been washed recently.
- **Eyedrops** Your child will need to be seen for the provider to prescribe these. Usually, the eyes will feel much better after the pollen is washed out and a cold compress (for example, a cold washcloth) is applied. If they are still itchy, put some special eyedrops in your child's eyes.
- **Oral antihistamines** If these measures aren't effective, your child probably also has hay fever (that is, allergic symptoms of the nose) and may need an oral antihistamine. If your child is >2yr you may give the OTC Claritin or Zyrtec.

## How can eye allergies be prevented?

Don't let your child touch his eyes unless his hands are washed. Hands may have pollen, animal substances, or other irritants on them. Stop using eye makeup (such as mascara or eyeliner) if that is the cause.

## When should I call my child's health care provider?

Call during office hours if:

- This treatment and an antihistamine do not relieve most of the symptoms in 2 or 3 days.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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