

Eye Infection (Pink Eye)

What is a bacterial eye infection?

When bacteria causes an eye infection, the eye drains a yellow discharge (pus). This condition is also called bacterial conjunctivitis, runny eyes, or mattery eyes.

Your child may have:

- yellow discharge in the eye
- eyelids stuck together with pus, especially after sleeping
- some redness in the white part of the eyes
- puffy eyelids.

Note: A small amount of cream-colored mucus in the inner corner of the eyes after sleeping is normal. Also, if you child has cold symptoms or a runny nose some drainage related to this may ooze out of the tear ducts.

What is the cause?

Eye infections with pus are caused by bacteria and can be a complication of a cold. Pink eyes without a yellow discharge, however, are more common and are due to a virus.

How long does it last?

With proper treatment the yellow discharge should clear up in 72 hours. The red eyes (which are due to the cold) may continue for several more days.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Cleaning the eye** Before putting in any medicines, remove all the pus from the eye with warm water and wet cotton balls. Unless this is done, the medicine will not have a chance to work.
- **Antibiotic eyedrops or ointments** This infection must be treated with an antibiotic eye medicine. You will need to be seen in the office to get a prescription because along with pink eye can be an ear infection although you child may not show signs.
- **Contact lenses** Children with contact lenses need to switch to glasses temporarily. This will prevent damage to the cornea.
- **Contagiousness** The pus from the eyes can cause eye infections in other people if they get some of it on their eyes. Therefore, it is very important for the sick child to have his own washcloth and towel. He should be encouraged not to touch or rub his eyes because it can make his infection last longer. Touching his eyes also puts a lot of germs on his fingers. Your child's hands should be washed often to prevent spreading the infection. After using eyedrops for 24 hours, and if the pus is minimal, children can return to day care or school.

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

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- The outer eyelids become very red or swollen.
- The eye becomes painful.
- The vision becomes blurred.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

Call within 24 hours if:

- The infection isn't cleared up after 3 days of treatment.
- Your child develops an earache.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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