

Bacterial conjunctivitis

What is Bacterial Conjunctivitis?

This is an infection of the outer parts of the eye, normally affecting both eyes. The bacteria most commonly at fault are the Staphylococcus, the Streptococcus and Hemophylus influenza.



What are the Symptoms?

One or both eyes become Red and sticky with a yellow discharge. There is only mild discomfort or gritty sensation with a very watery eye. Some mucus discharge is common. Pain is not an early feature. The eye lids often become. Your vision should not be affected.

How did I catch it?

It is very infectious and is usually transmitted by direct contact a hand shake, swimming pool, towels etc..

Treatment

Cleaning the eye is important using cooled boiled water and cotton buds/gauze squares. Using eye drops of Chloramphenicol which can be bought over the counter alternatively your General Practitioner can prescribe appropriate antibiotics. With drops it should settle very quickl

What precautions should I take?

The infection is infectious. Prevention is important for avoiding the disease and stopping its spread,. Careful washing of the hands, the use of clean tissues will help. If you work with children or the general public you should be off work until your eyes stop dripping/watering.

At home, keep face flannels, hand towels etc. separate from the rest of the family.

Try not to wipe your eyes with your hands as this will make your hand infectious. Use fresh dry tissues and dispose after each use.

Wash hands yours hands regularly.

What complications can occur?

With antibiotics or antiseptics like Brolene the infection should clear up quickly, if this does not occur seeing your doctor is important or visiting an Eye Casualty.

Very occasionally the infection can move from the outside of the eye to the inside in which case the symptoms will get a lot worse quickly with blurred vision and pain, if this occurs an urgent visit to your doctor or eye casualty is required. But this is very rare, more likely in the elderly.

Other family members

This is a common condition and infectious. If any of the family develop red eye you will know the symptoms and they should also be seen.

Will it damage my eyes?

No, not usually. It is an infection of the outside of the eye only very rarely will it enter the eye.

The exception is if you wear contact lenses where the defence of the eye is compromised. You should remove your contact lenses in such infections and be seen by an eye doctor urgently. Contact lenses and red eyes may indicate a corneal ulcer which is much more serious.

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