

CHILDREN
WITH

conjunctivitis

(inflammation of the eye)



Children with **conjunctivitis** (inflammation of the eye)

General information:

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the mucous membrane on the inside of the eyelids in the white part of the eye.

Conjunctivitis is common among children and is caused by either bacteria or a virus. The diagnosis is based on the symptoms and possibly also an analysis of secretion from the eye. Treatment depends on the cause of conjunctivitis.

How is it contracted?

Conjunctivitis is highly contagious and is transmitted via close contact with other people and/or because you get the virus or bacteria on your hands and rub your eyes afterwards. This applies both when conjunctivitis is caused by a virus (common cold virus) and by bacteria (staphylococcus, which is seen in e.g. impetigo). Newborn babies may be infected with chlamydia if the mother is infected at birth.

Symptoms:

- Irritation and a feeling of having “something in the eye”
- Redness of the eye
- In case of a bacterial infection, the eye may be red and filled with pus, and it can be difficult to open the eye
- With a virus infection, the eye may be very red
- Infection often begins in one eye and spreads to the other within a day or two

Red irritated eyes can also be caused by:

- Hay fever, an allergic reaction, e.g. pollen and house dust mites
- Delayed development of the tear duct causing the eye to water. The tear duct develops during the first 12 months of the child’s life



- Irritation of the eye caused by bright light, dust, or foreign bodies.

Good advice:

- Good hygiene. Wash your own and the child's hands often
- Use disposable tissues
- Give your child its own towel
- You may bathe the child's eyes in lukewarm water or salt water to remove pus and scabs.

When to see a doctor?

Contact a doctor if the child:

- has the above symptoms and they get worse, e.g. if the amount of pus increases and it hurts and also if the eyes become sensitive to light or your child's sight is affected.

Contact your general practitioner first because he/she knows your child better than the doctor on call. You can also get good advice and guidance from your health visitor.

Treatment:

Conjunctivitis caused by bacteria is treated with antibiotics. Conjunctivitis caused by a virus usually passes by itself.

Prevention:

In practice, conjunctivitis is difficult to prevent because it is highly contagious when many children are in close contact.

It is important to wash your hands after having been in contact with an infected child.

In general, it is important for both adults and children to wash their hands often. Washing one's hands has been shown to reduce the risk of infection considerably.

Childcare:

The child is not allowed to be in childcare if:

- the eyes are filled with pus
- the child is very sensitive to light
- the child is generally not feeling well.

If the child has begun an antibiotic treatment by a doctor, the child may return to the childcare centre the day after the treatment was initiated.

Parental guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared by a working group set up by the departments of paediatrics in Herning, Randers, Skejby and Viborg.

The intention with these guidelines is to provide parents with advice across the following sectors: health visitors, general practitioners family doctors, doctors on call, and the staff at paediatric admission wards in the Central Denmark Region.

The parental guidelines can be seen and downloaded from the internet on the web site www.fv.rm.dk

You may order additional copies from Rikke Dalsgaard,
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