

**MSAD # 13 / RSU #83
Health Alert**

**Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
Important Notice to Parents**

Conjunctivitis is a common infection affecting one or both eyes that causes the white of the eye to appear pink or red. Vision is usually normal; however, the eye may water profusely and feel irritated. Eyelids may be swollen. A discharge of liquid or mucus from the infected eye may occur. Eyelids and lashes may become crusted and stick together as the mucus hardens, particularly while sleeping. It frequently causes itching, pain, or sensitivity to light. Conjunctivitis is commonly caused by viruses or bacteria that may first manifest in one eye and then spread to the other eye within days. Viral conjunctivitis usually produces a clear, watery discharge. Bacterial conjunctivitis usually produces a thicker, yellow-green discharge. Eyelids stuck together after sleeping are most common with bacterial conjunctivitis. Conjunctivitis may also be caused from allergens, such as cosmetics or pollen; reaction to air pollutants, such as dust or smoke; and foreign bodies in the eye, such as contact lenses. Certain chronic illnesses may also cause conjunctivitis.

Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis are easily spread through contact with discharge from the eye or respiratory passages, or from touching or sharing contaminated items of the infected person, such as eye cosmetics, contact lenses, pillows, towels, multiple dose eye medication applicators and microscope eyepieces.

The incubation period varies depending on the type of conjunctivitis but is usually from 12 hours up to a few days. For bacterial conjunctivitis, the incubation period ranges from 24 - 72 hours, and for viral conjunctivitis, the incubation period is usually 12 hours - 3 days.

Bacterial conjunctivitis generally lasts fewer than 5 days, but may persist up to 2–3 weeks. It is contagious while symptoms are present, or until a course of treatment (such as an antibiotic) is started. The symptoms of viral conjunctivitis are usually worse on days 3–5 of infection, and will usually clear up on their own within 7–14 days. Viral conjunctivitis may be contagious up to 14 days after the appearance of signs and symptoms.

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that children with pink or red conjunctiva (whites of eyes) with white or yellow drainage from eye, often with matted eyelids after sleep, and eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eyes or altered vision be excluded from school until examined by a health care provider and approved for readmission (with or without treatment). With bacterial conjunctivitis, health care providers usually recommend exclusion until 24 hours after starting topical antibiotic therapy.

Health care professionals may vary in how they choose to treat this condition and treatment also varies based on the cause of the conjunctivitis but often antibiotic drops or an antibiotic ointment is prescribed. If the conjunctivitis is accompanied by moderate to severe pain in the eye, swelling of the skin around the eye, or vision problems that are not resolved from wiping discharge from the eye immediate evaluation by a primary care provider is recommended.

Prevention and Care for conjunctivitis - Use of hot or cold moist packs may relieve discomfort caused by conjunctivitis. Other actions for the prevention and care of conjunctivitis include: Frequent handwashing. Handwashing is the best method to control and prevent the spread of conjunctivitis; Wipe eyes as necessary to keep free of discharge and promptly discard soiled tissue or cotton balls. Use a clean tissue, cotton ball, wash cloth, or towel each time; Wash hands after touching infected eyes and items like eye drop dispenser and eyeglasses; Do not share personal items that touch the eyes, such as towels and cosmetics; Throw away and replace cosmetics that were used during the infection.

Contact lens wearers should be sure their primary care provider is aware that they wear contact lenses or consider consult with a licensed eye care professional. The care provider may advise the student to replace the lenses, solution, and case that were used during the infection, or to discontinue use of a particular brand of contact lenses or brand of solution. The care provider may also recommend that the lenses be removed and glasses worn until the infection is over.

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the [Maine CDC web site](#).

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