

PATIENT INFORMATION – CONJUNCTIVITIS

There are three types of conjunctivitis, each with a different cause. These are:

1. Infective conjunctivitis - reddening and watering of the eyes and a sticky coating on the eyelashes, particularly upon waking.
2. Allergic conjunctivitis - causing itchy, swollen eyes.
3. Irritant conjunctivitis - The conjunctivitis should settle once the irritant is removed. If the eyes are very red and painful, seek medical attention immediately.

Self-care for Infective conjunctivitis:

- Remove your contact lenses - take them out until all the signs and symptoms of the infection have gone. (If you have been given antibiotics, avoid wearing contact lenses until 24 hours after you have finished the course.)
- Use lubricant eye drops – these can be bought at pharmacies*.
- Gently clean away sticky substances from your eyes using cotton wool soaked in water.
- Wash your hands regularly and avoid sharing towels, pillows and flannels to prevent the infection from spreading.

Most cases of infective conjunctivitis do not require treatment and will get better within one to two weeks. Antibiotics are not usually prescribed. If your infective conjunctivitis is particularly severe though or has lasted for more than two weeks, you should see your GP where you may be prescribed antibiotics.

Self-care for Allergic conjunctivitis

Your treatment will depend on which type of allergic conjunctivitis you have. You can follow the guidelines below to treat your condition at home:

- Remove your contact lenses.
- Do not rub your eyes, even though your eyes may be itchy.
- Place a cool compress or damp flannel over your eyes.
- Avoid exposure to the allergen such as pollen, if possible.

Self-care for Irritant conjunctivitis

Most cases of irritant conjunctivitis do not require any treatment as the condition should clear up once the irritant is removed from the eye.

If things don't get better: When to seek help

Contact your GP or visit the nearest accident and emergency department if you have any unusual symptoms such as moderate to severe pain or sensitivity to light, disturbed vision, intense redness in one or both of your eyes, as you may have a different eye condition.

Local Services

The NHS Direct Wales website allows you to search for local services in your area, such as Pharmacy and Sexual Health Clinics. Choose the service you require and follow the guidance on how to search.

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/

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If you become unwell or are injured, choose the right NHS service to make sure you get the best treatment. The Choose Well campaign explains what each NHS service does, and when it should be used.

Choosing well means that you and your family will get the best treatment. It also allows busy NHS services to help the people who need them most.

If you are unsure about which option to choose, please call NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 or visit the Choose Well website at www.choosewellwales.org.uk

This information has been produced based on previous information leaflets and the evidence available at the time of publication. It has been clinically reviewed however if you notice anything that needs updating or amending please contact ppi.team@wales.nhs.uk

If you require this information in another language or format please ask a member of staff.

For further advice or information contact NHS Direct Wales 0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk