

For further advice, please contact your GP for an appointment. If your GP thinks it is necessary, he will refer you to the hospital.

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This leaflet is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

This leaflet has been reviewed by the Readers' Panel March 2014.



Viral Conjunctivitis

Information for patients and carers

What is Viral Conjunctivitis?

It is inflammation of the conjunctiva (the layer over the white part of the eye) caused by viral infection. It is a very common infection of the eye easily caught and passed on by others. Viral Conjunctivitis is usually very contagious for approximately 10-14 days from the onset of symptoms.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Eyelids may be puffy
- The white part of the eye will be red
- Gritty, sore eyes
- Watering of the eyes
- Light sensitivity of the eyes
- You may feel generally unwell and have cold-like symptoms / sore throat
- Usually in both eyes, but after starting in one eye then involving the other eye a few days later.

How did I catch it?

- Close personal contact
- Someone coughing or sneezing near to you
- Sharing towels, flannels or pillow-cases with someone already infected
- Touching an object or shaking hands with someone who is infected and has not washed their hands.

What is the treatment?

Unlike a bacterial infection which responds quickly to antibiotics, viral conjunctivitis will not respond to antibiotic treatment. The virus has to run its course and can last for several weeks. There are things that you can do to ease the symptoms. These include:-

- Eye lubricants (drops, gels or ointments) which can be obtained from your local pharmacy or GP
- Cold compress (i.e. cold flannel) to a closed eye
- A limited period of time off from work or school.

What can I do?

- Take any treatments prescribed by your doctor or specialist nurse
- Always wash your hands before and after touching your eye
- Only use tissues once then throw them away
- Do not share towels, flannels, pillowcases etc. with anyone whose immune system is compromised.