



Student Health Center

UNC Wilmington

INSTRUCTION SHEET: CONJUNCTIVITIS

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed conjunctivitis, an infection of the outer layers of the eye. The infection is caused by germs (bacteria or viruses).

Symptoms of conjunctivitis include: redness, itching, burning, and tearing. Small amounts of pus may form in the eye. In the morning, an accumulation of matting (yellow-tan “sleep”) may occur.

Conjunctivitis is contagious. The infection is spread by direct contact: Touching someone else or touching your unaffected eye after touching your infected eye can spread the germs.

The key to treatment of bacterial conjunctivitis is antibacterial drops.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR CONJUNCTIVITIS:

- 1- If prescribed, use the antibiotic eye drops faithfully, as directed. Wetting eye drops can also be used to moisten and flush the eye.
- 2- To place drops in the eye, hold the bottle about an inch above the eye, taking care not to touch the eye or lashes with the tip of the bottle. Pull down the lower lid, and let a drop or two fall gently onto the lower lid; from there, the medicine will spread throughout the outer layers of the eye. If you have difficulty putting the drops in, have someone else put the drops in for you.
- 3- If matting accumulates, remove it gently by splashing warm water on the face or by applying a warm, wet washcloth to the face.
- 4- If you wear contacts, leave the contact lens out (use glasses) until your eye is back to normal. When resuming use of contacts, use a new (sterile) pair and new solution, or you may re-infect your eyes.
- 5- If you use eye makeup, stop until your eye is back to normal. When resuming use of makeup, use new products, or you may re-infect your eyes.
- 6- Rest your eye as possible. If bright light or watching TV bothers the eye, avoid these irritants.
- 7- Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve the mild itching or burning caused by conjunctivitis. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
- 8- Try not to rub the eye. Wash your hands well after touching the eye. Do not let others use the same towel or washcloth you use.
- 9- If your condition worsens, return to the Student Health Center or see an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) promptly. Specifically, seek care if you experience increasing pain or decreasing vision.