

CONJUNCTIVITIS (BACTERIAL)

Bacterial conjunctivitis (one of the causes of so called 'red eye') is a common condition in which the thin layer of tissue that covers the white part of the front of your eye (the conjunctiva) becomes inflamed. Your eye may water and look red or pink. Sometimes a sticky liquid (discharge) is produced that may make it hard to open your eye when you wake up, and often dries on your eyelashes. The bacterial infection that causes this type of conjunctivitis may start in one eye and spread to the other.

You may have a burning feeling in your eye, or it may feel as if it has grit in it. You should be able to see normally. If the sticky discharge is blurring your vision, blinking a few times should help to make your vision clearer.

In most people, bacterial conjunctivitis will get better by itself within 5 to 7 days. Bacterial conjunctivitis is not usually itchy: if your eyes are itching this may mean that your conjunctivitis is not bacterial.

How can I treat conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis will usually get better without needing treatment. Antibiotic eye drops or ointment may be used to treat cases of severe bacterial conjunctivitis. Your pharmacist or optometrist can advise whether or not you need treatment.

Chloramphenicol eye drops or eye ointment may help if there is lots of sticky discharge, the eye is red and the conjunctivitis does not seem to be getting better after a few days.

Chloramphenicol eye drops:

- Put 1 drop into your eye every 2 hours for the first 48 hours.
- After 48 hours you can change this to 1 drop every 4 hours.
- You only need to use the drops during waking hours.
- Keep using the drops for 48 hours after your eye has got better.

Chloramphenicol eye ointment:

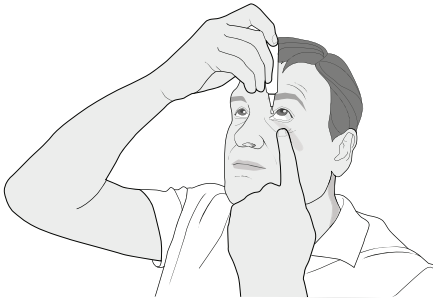
- Put about 1 cm of ointment into the space between your lower eyelid and your eye.
- If you are using eye drops **and** eye ointment, use the ointment only at night, just before going to bed.
- If you are only using the eye ointment, use it 4 times a day.
- Keep using the ointment for 48 hours after your eye has got better.

How do I use my eye drops or ointment?



First, wash your hands.

Gently pull down your lower eyelid and look upwards.



Hold the dropper above your eye and squeeze 1 drop into the space between your eyeball and lower eyelid. If you are using eye ointment, hold the tube upside down near your eye and squeeze a line of ointment along the inside of your lower eyelid.



Let go of your eyelid, tilt your head downwards, and keep your eye closed for 2 to 3 minutes.

What else can help?

- Wipe your eyes with cotton wool soaked in cooled, boiled water.
- Wash your hands regularly, and always after touching your eyes.
- Don't wear contact lenses until your eyes are better.

Do I need to see a doctor?

You should contact your local hospital eye emergency department or A&E if:

- you have recently had an eye operation (in the last 6 weeks)
- you have severe pain or loss of vision

See your doctor or optometrist straight away if:

- you can't see as well as usual after blinking a few times
- light hurts your eye or makes it feel uncomfortable
- moving your eye hurts or you can't move it as easily as usual.

An optometrist will give you a free Eye Health Examination if:

- you need to see an optometrist straight away (see above)
- you've injured your eye or it has something in it
- you've treated your eye but it's not getting better, or it's getting worse
- you wear contact lenses
- your eye is very painful, or the area around your eye is red and swollen
- you have a red eye and no discharge.

Also see your doctor if:

- your child is under 2 years old and has conjunctivitis
- you are pregnant or breastfeeding and need treatment
- you or a member of your family have (or have had) a blood disorder.

[Eye Health Examination Wales](#) has a list of optometrists you can go to or ask your pharmacist for more information.

Can I give conjunctivitis to other people?

Yes, bacterial conjunctivitis spreads easily via the things you touch. Wash your hands regularly and don't share towels or pillows.

If your child has conjunctivitis, they do not normally need to be excluded from school or nursery but check with their school or nursery if you have any concerns.

Where can I find further information?

Eye Health Examination Wales: www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk/eye-health-examination-wales

NHS Direct Wales: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales Tel: 0845 4647 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute, in addition to telephone providers access charge.