

# Sore eyes

## Advice on treatments for conjunctivitis

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Conjunctivitis is an eye condition caused by infection or allergies. It usually gets better in a couple of weeks without treatment.

Conjunctivitis is also known as red or pink eye.

It usually affects both eyes and makes them:

- Bloodshot
- burn or feel gritty
- produce pus that sticks to lashes
- itch
- water



Conjunctivitis that produces sticky pus is contagious



If eyes are red and feel gritty, the conjunctivitis is also usually contagious



Conjunctivitis caused by allergies like hay fever makes eyes red and watery but isn't contagious

## How to treat conjunctivitis yourself

There are things you can do to help ease your symptoms.

Use clean cotton wool (one piece for each eye). Boil water and then let it cool down before you:

- gently rub your eye lashes to clean off crusts
- hold a cold flannel on your eyes for a few minutes to cool them down

## Stop infectious conjunctivitis from spreading

### Do

- wash hands regularly with warm soapy water
- wash pillows and face cloths in hot water and detergent

### Don't

- wear contact lenses until your eyes are better
- share towels and pillows
- rub your eyes

## Staying away from work or school

You don't need to avoid work or school unless you or your child are feeling very unwell.

If there are a few children with conjunctivitis at your child's school, yours might be asked to stay at home.

## A pharmacist can help with conjunctivitis

Speak to a pharmacist about conjunctivitis. They can give you advice and suggest eye drops or antihistamines to help with your symptoms. Please be aware that Pharmacies will not be able to give antibiotics eye drops over the counter for children under the age of two.

## See a GP if:

- your baby has red eyes – get an **urgent appointment** if your baby is less than 28 days old
- you wear contact lenses and have conjunctivitis symptoms as well as spots on your eyelids – you might be allergic to the lenses
- your symptoms haven't cleared up after 2 weeks

## Treatment from your GP

Treatment will depend on the cause of your conjunctivitis. If it's a bacterial infection you might be prescribed antibiotics. But these won't work if it's caused by a virus (viral conjunctivitis) or an allergy.

Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can cause conjunctivitis. This type takes longer to clear up.

**See a GP urgently or go to A&E if you have:**

- pain in your eyes
- sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- changes in your vision, like wavy lines or flashing
- intense redness in one eye or both eyes

These can be signs of a more serious eye problem.

**More information:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/red-eye/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/conjunctivitis/>