

Concerns

If you notice any of the following problems please call the eye emergency helpline on **0300 019 4181**,
8am-6pm, Monday-Saturday and Sunday, 8.30am-2pm

- Change in vision
- Severe eye pain
- Pain during eye movement
- Fever
- Light sensitivity
- Lid swelling
- No improvement after 48-72 hours of using the medication

Viral conjunctivitis


The Eye Unit

This leaflet is for patients diagnosed
with viral conjunctivitis.




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What is conjunctivitis?

The surface membrane of your eye is known as the conjunctiva. It forms a thin transparent layer over the white of your eye and under your eyelids. Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva or clear film which covers the eyeball. It is usually caused by a bacteria or virus.

What is viral conjunctivitis?

Viral conjunctivitis is a highly contagious, acute conjunctival infection, sometimes caused by the adenovirus.

Symptoms

- Red eyes
- Gritty eyes
- Itching
- An irritable sensation
- Sticky/watery eyes
- Eyes that are stuck together in the mornings
- Sensitivity to light
- A cold or throat problem

How is viral conjunctivitis treated?

There is no medication for viral conjunctivitis and it does not respond to antibiotic drops as it is not caused by a bacteria. In time, most infections will clear up by themselves. The best treatment for viral conjunctivitis is to use lubricating drops, these may help reduce discomfort and grittiness. Simple painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen tablets, can also help control viral symptoms. The conjunctivitis disappears when your body becomes immune to the virus and fights the virus off, just as with a cold or flu. Be aware that it can take several weeks to recover and you may have symptoms for some time.

What can I do to help myself at home?

You can clear the discharge from your eyes with clean, cotton wool pads soaked in cool boiled water. This will help soothe the eyes. Make sure you use a clean pad for each eye. Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.

Important guidelines

Always wash your hands before and after touching the eyes. Avoid wearing makeup while you have conjunctivitis and discard any make up that was used while your eyes were red.

How do I prevent conjunctivitis from spreading?

Conjunctivitis is contagious and spreads very easily through water droplets, e.g. coughing and sneezing, or contact with tissues, flannels, towels, or pillow cases. It is really important to wash your hands frequently and dispose of tissues after use to prevent the condition from spreading to others, such as family members or colleagues.

What should I do if I wear contact lenses?

Contact lenses should not be worn until symptoms have completely cleared.