Remember...

- always wash your hands before and after touching your eye/s
- always finish the course of treatment if you have been prescribed medication, even if your symptoms have improved
- always have regular eye checks with your Optometrist
- always protect your eyes with goggles or glasses when carrying out DIY or using any power equipment
- if you splash anything into your eye always rinse with plenty of tap water and seek medical advice
- never use anyone else's medication (this includes eye-drops)

For further information and advice please contact:

Emergency Helpline: 0300 019 1515

Mon-Sat: 8am-6pm Sunday: 8:30am-2pm
and bank holidays: 8:30am-6pm

To read this leaflet in a different language, please visit our website: **www.uhd.nhs.uk/visit/patient-information-leaflets** and use the language and accessibility function available along the top of the site.

To ask for this leaflet in larger print, please contact the patient experience team on **0300 019 8499** or email **uhd.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net**.

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Allergic conjunctivitis (Hayfever eyes)



The Eye Unit

Information and advice for patients about
Allergic conjunctivitis (Hayfever eyes)

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What is Allergic Conjunctivitis (Hayfever eyes)?

This is a term for a condition which you get from an allergic reaction to pollen, dust, fur, household chemicals used for cleaning, make up, other beauty products such as face creams etc and even contact lenses for those who wear them. etc.

When 'the allergen' comes into contact with the eye it can cause inflammation of the conjunctiva (the sensitive membrane that covers the eyeball and inner surface of the eye).

It can happen at any time of the year but is more common in the spring and summer. This is because the air is full of pollen.

The allergic response is your body's natural response to foreign particles. However, if your eyes are overly sensitive the response is much worse causing the release of 'histamine' in the eyes.

Signs and symptoms

Histamine makes your eyes:

red, itchy

- watery discharge
- swollen eyelids with red puffy skin around the eyes
- the white part of your eyes may bulge out and look jelly-like

Treatment - non medical

- Avoid the cause of the allergy if known i.e. cats, dogs, fur
- Avoid wide open grassy spaces such as parks, fields or gardens
- Keep air vents and windows closed in the house, train or car
- After a period outside, wash your hair and body, change clothes to remove pollen
- Use 'cold compresses' to the closed eyes. Use a clean flannel soaked in boiled, cooled water that has been in the fridge
- Wash your hands before and after any treatment
- Don't rub or scratch your eyes as this makes them worse
- Do not wear contact lenses when you have conjunctivitis

Treatment - medical

There are two types of eyedrops that can be used for adults:

- Symptomatic relief with preservative free lubricating drops
- Longer term treatment such as Opticrom eyedrops which take at least a week to start working. The doctor may prescribe something stronger if Opticrom eyedrops have not helped
- You can use both together to get some immediate relief and to keep eyes comfortable whilst the allergy is present, which may be four to six months. Children with symptoms; it is important that the family doctor is made aware of the onset so that treatment can be provided without delay in future episodes. The local chemist would be the best person to provide treatment over the counter initially
- Antihistamine tablets, available from the chemist. In addition, if the eyes become painful, paracetamol tablets may also be of help to reduce pain and swelling

Concerns

- Hay fever allergies are not contagious, it is not an infection and you cannot catch it from someone else
- Allergies may be inherited
- If you suffer with other allergies you are likely to be more prone to allergic conjunctivitis
- Check the weather forecasts for details of the pollen count and, if high, avoid wearing your contact lenses

Your own GP should be able to advise you if you get allergic conjunctivitis.

Allergic conjunctivitis (Hayfever eyes)