

# Self Care - Conjunctivitis

## What is conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is irritation of the clear layer that covers the eye and lines the inside of the eyelids. It is most commonly caused by a virus that infects the eye. Your eyes may be red and watery and you may notice a sticky coating on the eyelashes, particularly when waking up in the morning. Both eyes are often affected. The eyes are usually slightly uncomfortable and can feel “gritty” but should not be extremely painful. Conjunctivitis is a very common condition and is responsible for 35% of all eye-related problems seen in GP surgeries.

## How is it treated?

Conjunctivitis rarely requires medical treatment and will normally heal by itself within one or two weeks. The risk of any complications from conjunctivitis is very low.

## What can I do to help?

- If you wear contact lenses, take them out until all the signs and symptoms of the conjunctivitis have gone. If you have glasses, wear them instead
- Do not rub your eyes, even though your eyes may be itchy. Rubbing them can make your symptoms worse
- Wetting a flannel with cool water and holding it over your eyes will help ease your symptoms
- Gently clean your eyelids and eyelashes using cotton wool soaked in cold, clean water.

## To help prevent the spread of conjunctivitis:

- Change pillowcases frequently
- Do not share eye cosmetics
- Do not share towels or handkerchiefs
- Handle and clean contact lenses properly
- Keep hands away from the eye
- Replace eye cosmetics regularly
- Wash your hands often.

## When do I need to see a Doctor?

- If your eyes are very painful
- If your eyes are sensitive to the light (photophobia)
- If you still have symptoms after 10 days
- If you have problems with your vision
- If it is a baby under one month old who is affected.

Source [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and [www.webmentorlibrary.com](http://www.webmentorlibrary.com)

If you would like further advice contact NHS Direct on 08454647 or see [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



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