

Pinkeye Information Sheet

What is Pinkeye?

Pinkeye is an infection of the covering of the eyeball. Allergies, chemicals, irritants, bacteria, viruses and other germs can cause it. It is commonly found in children less than five years old but it can affect anyone. This infection often accompanies a cold or chest infection during the winter months.

What are the signs and symptoms of Pinkeye?

Children with pinkeye complain of a scratchy feeling or pain in their eyes and may have a lot of tears and pus discharge. The infection turns the whites of the eyes pink or red. When the child wakes up after a sleep, pus or discharge often makes the eyelids stick together. It is common for the eye to be sensitive to light.

Is Pinkeye contagious?

Yes. Pinkeye is contagious. Pinkeye is spread by direct contact with the discharge from the affected eye passed on fingers, or through contact with face cloths, bedding and toys contaminated by the discharge. An infected person can pass pinkeye to another person 2-3 days before the symptoms appear. Watch your child for signs of pinkeye if another child has it.

Is there a treatment?

Pinkeye that is caused by bacteria can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Antibiotics can also stop the infection from spreading to others. There is no treatment for pinkeye that is caused by a virus.

What to do if your child has Pinkeye:

- Contact your physician. It's not easy to tell whether the infection is caused by a bacteria or a virus. It may be necessary for the physician to prescribe antibiotics for the child.
- Complete the course of medication prescribed by the doctor even when symptoms disappear.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after touching or wiping the child's eye.
- Don't let your child share towels or washcloths with anyone else, because this could spread the infection.
- Wash bed linens and washcloths daily until all redness and sticky discharge has disappeared from the eyes.
- If your child's eyes have pus (yellow, thick) or a discharge, he/she should not return to their child care facility until after taking an antibiotic for one full day and until a physician has cleared the child to return.
- Avoid swimming until the eyes are healed.

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For further information, please call:
York Region Health Services *Health Connection*
1-800-361-5653
www.region.york.on.ca