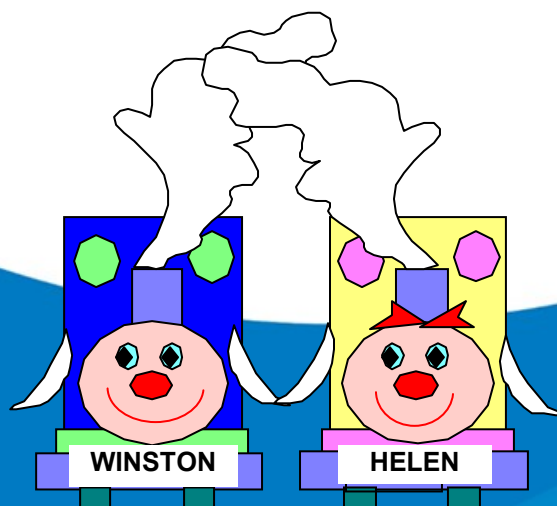


Infective Conjunctivitis

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What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis means inflammation of the conjunctiva. The conjunctiva is the thin 'skin' that covers the white part of the eyes and the inside of the eyelids.

What causes conjunctivitis?

Bacterial or viral infection is the most common cause.

Allergy is another common cause. For example, many people with hay fever (allergic to pollen) have red and inflamed conjunctiva.

Irritant conjunctivitis sometimes occurs. For example, your conjunctiva may become inflamed after getting some shampoo in your eyes. The chlorine in swimming baths is a common cause of mild irritant conjunctivitis.

Risks and benefits of treatment

If you do not treat the infection fully it may return.

Always complete the full instructions for the eye drops or ointment as instructed by your doctor.

If you are worried that the condition is not improving, please seek advice from the practitioner who prescribed the treatment.

How to use eye ointment

If you are also using eye drops use them first, then wait for five minutes before applying the eye ointment.

- Wash your hands.
- Take the lid off the ointment and tip the head back.
- Gently pull down your lower eyelid and look up.
- Hold the tube above the eye and gently squeeze a 1cm line of ointment along the inside of the lower eyelid, taking care not to touch the eye or eyelashes with the tip of the tube. Blink your eyes to spread the ointment over the surface of the eyeball.
- Vision may be blurred on opening the eyes – try not to rub the eyes. The blurring will clear after a few moments if the child keeps blinking.
- Wipe away any excess ointment with a clean tissue.
- Repeat this procedure for the other eye if advised to do so by your doctor or pharmacist.
- Replace the lid of the tube. Take care not to touch the tip of the tube with your fingers.
- If you are using more than one type of ointment, wait for about half-an-hour before using the next ointment to allow the first to be absorbed into the eye.

Nature and reasons for the condition

Most cases of infective conjunctivitis are caused by common bacteria and viruses - often the same ones that cause coughs and colds. Conjunctivitis commonly develops when you have a cold or cough. Sometimes it occurs alone. In the vast majority of cases, infective conjunctivitis is not serious and clears within a few days without leaving any permanent damage to the eye.

What are the symptoms of common infective conjunctivitis?

One eye may be infected, but it usually spreads to both eyes. The 'whites' of the eyes look inflamed, and red or pink.

The eyes may feel gritty and water more than usual.

Some mild soreness may develop, but it is not usually very painful.

The eyelids may become swollen, and are often stuck together with gluey material ('discharge') after a sleep.

Vision is not normally affected. You may get some blurring of vision due to discharge at the front of the eye. However, this clears with blinking.

Many infections clear on their own within 2-5 days without treatment. If symptoms get worse then see a doctor to check your eye and to see if you need treatment.

Usual form of treatment

- Not treating is an option for mild infections. The tears contain chemicals that fight off bacteria. Many infections clear on their own within 2-5 days without treatment. If symptoms get worse then see a doctor to check your eye and to see if you need treatment.
- Bathing the eyes with cool clean water may be soothing.
- Antibiotic eye drops or ointment are often prescribed. Antibiotics do not kill viruses.

However, it can be difficult to tell the difference between viral and bacterial conjunctivitis. An antibiotic will clear bacteria and also prevent secondary bacterial infection of a viral conjunctivitis. Speak to your child's nurse if you are unsure how to apply the drops or ointment.

Other general advice

- Do not wear contact lenses until symptoms have completely gone, and for 24 hours after the last dose of any eye drops or ointment.
- Infective conjunctivitis is contagious. The likelihood of passing it on is not high unless you are in close contact with others. However, until the infection has gone, you can prevent passing it on by the following:

Wash your hands regularly, particularly after touching your eyes.

Do not share towels, pillows or utensils.

If you have any further questions, please contact your child's consultant via their secretary via the hospital switchboard. The secretaries are available Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

If you need to contact the department outside of these hours, please phone either:

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