



VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS

Conjunctivitis means “inflammation of the conjunctiva”¹.

The conjunctiva is the transparent membrane that covers the white areas of the eye and the inside of the eyelids².

Conjunctivitis can be noninfectious (for example allergic conjunctivitis or irritative conjunctivitis) or infectious, related to either viruses or bacteria². 80% of acute cases of conjunctivitis are viral².

Viral conjunctivitis may be painful but are mostly benign and self-limiting³. In few cases, the conjunctival infection may spread to the cornea and require medical follow-up².



Blurry vision



Burning sensation



Itchy eyes



Red eyes



Watery Eyes

CAUSES

WHAT CAN CAUSE VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

The most common virus involved in viral conjunctivitis is the same that causes runny nose and sore throat in people with a common cold⁴: adenovirus, which is responsible for 65% to 90% of cases of viral conjunctivitis².



Transmission may occur through contaminated hands contact with the eye or by direct eye contact, by contaminated droplets expelled while coughing or sneezing, fomites, or contaminated swimming pools^{3,4}.

Adenovirus conjunctivitis is highly contagious, usually for 10-12 days from onset, as long as the eyes are red, and during the incubation period of 3-7 days before symptoms onset³.

The conjunctivitis frequently spreads following an epidemic pattern, through entire communities: families, schools, offices, shipyards, athletic teams, residential communities, and military organizations...

Other viruses may also cause viral conjunctivitis, including herpes viruses: *herpes simplex*, that causes also fever blister on the lips, and *varicella-zoster herpes* responsible for chickenpox

and shingles³. Measles and mumps viruses can also cause conjunctivitis, which is common in childhood².

Usually, adenovirus affects patients aged 20-40 years whereas Herpes infection occurs mainly in young children and infants³.

SYMPTOMS

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Viral conjunctivitis is usually associated with burning or itching red eye(s) with watery discharge^{2,3}. There may be a tender lump before the ear, which is a lymph node activated in case of herpes infection².

In most cases, **herpes conjunctivitis** affects only one eye whereas adenoviral conjunctivitis rapidly extend to the second eye¹.

In the case of herpes conjunctivitis, it is often part of a chickenpox infection, and associated with skin blisters on the body^{1,2}. There may be vesicles on the eyelids¹.


Most cases of viral conjunctivitis are acute, benign, and self-limited, and the infection usually resolves spontaneously within 2-4 weeks³.

In few cases, viral conjunctivitis (especially with Herpes) may extend to the cornea and threaten the vision².

DIAGNOSTIC

HOW TO DIAGNOSE A VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS PROBLEM?

Generally, a diagnosis of viral conjunctivitis is made on the clinical features alone and does not require further testing³.



VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS

ALLERGIC CONJUNCTIVITIS

The background helps the diagnosis:

- **Adenoviral conjunctivitis** may be associated with recent exposure to an individual with a red eye at home, school, or work, or to recent symptoms of cold, sore throat or flu-like episode³. A history of epidemic pattern of conjunctivitis in the family, school or workplace is highly evocative of adenoviral conjunctivitis.
- **Herpes conjunctivitis** may be part of a chickenpox infection, with skin blisters, or it may happen in individuals with history of lip fever blisters or shingles³.

Rapid antigen testing is available for adenoviruses and can be used to confirm suspected viral causes of conjunctivitis to prevent unnecessary antibiotic use^{1,2}.

TREATMENT

What treatments are available for viral conjunctivitis?

In most cases, viral conjunctivitis is self-limiting, and treatment only aims at symptoms relief and avoidance of transmission to other people^{2,3}.

Pain may be relieved with **cold compresses** and **chilled artificial tears**³.

Some **antiseptic eye** drops may help decrease contagiousness in patients with **adenoviral infections**².

Patients with **herpes simplex conjunctivitis** should receive **antiviral therapy** if there is a risk of cornea involvement¹.

Antibiotics are not effective against viruses and do not help recovery, but they may sometimes be prescribed by the ophthalmologist to prevent bacterial over-infection, especially in herpes conjunctivitis.

WHAT SHALL I DO TO AVOID TRANSMITTING OR CATCHING VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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HOW AND HOW LONG IS VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS CONTAGIOUS?

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MAY I WEAR MY CONTACT LENSES WITH VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VIRAL AND BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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CAN VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS BE PREVENTED BY VACCINES?

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