



## VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS

**Conjunctivitis means “inflammation of the conjunctiva”<sup>1</sup>.**

The conjunctiva is the transparent membrane that covers the white areas of the eye and the inside of the eyelids<sup>2</sup>.

Conjunctivitis can be noninfectious (for example allergic conjunctivitis or irritative conjunctivitis) or infectious, related to either viruses or bacteria<sup>2</sup>. 80% of acute cases of conjunctivitis are viral<sup>2</sup>.

Viral conjunctivitis may be painful but are mostly benign and self-limiting<sup>3</sup>. In few cases, the conjunctival infection may spread to the cornea and require medical follow-up<sup>2</sup>.



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 cold<sup>4</sup>: adenovirus, which is responsible for 65% to 90% of cases of viral conjunctivitis<sup>2</sup>.



**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<sup>3,4</sup>.**

**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 onset<sup>3</sup>.

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 shingles<sup>3</sup>. Measles and mumps viruses can also cause conjunctivitis, which is common in childhood<sup>2</sup>.

Usually, adenovirus affects patients aged 20-40 years whereas Herpes infection occurs mainly in young children and infants<sup>3</sup>.

## SYMPTOMS

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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

In most cases, **herpes conjunctivitis** affects only one eye whereas adenoviral conjunctivitis rapidly extend to the second eye<sup>1</sup>.

In the case of herpes conjunctivitis, it is often part of a chickenpox infection, and associated with skin blisters on the body<sup>1,2</sup>. There may be vesicles on the eyelids<sup>1</sup>.


Most cases of viral conjunctivitis are acute, benign, and self-limited, and the infection usually resolves spontaneously within 2-4 weeks<sup>3</sup>.

In few cases, viral conjunctivitis (especially with Herpes) may extend to the cornea and threaten the vision<sup>2</sup>.

## 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 testing<sup>3</sup>.



**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 episode<sup>3</sup>. 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 shingles<sup>3</sup>.

Rapid antigen testing is available for adenoviruses and can be used to confirm suspected viral causes of conjunctivitis to prevent unnecessary antibiotic use<sup>1,2</sup>.

## 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<sup>2,3</sup>.

Pain may be relieved with **cold compresses** and **chilled artificial tears**<sup>3</sup>.

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

Patients with **herpes simplex conjunctivitis** should receive **antiviral therapy** if there is a risk of cornea involvement<sup>1</sup>.

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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Viral conjunctivitis may be painful but are mostly benign and self-limiting<sup>3</sup>. In few cases, the conjunctival infection may spread to the cornea and require medical follow-up<sup>2</sup>.

## 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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