



BACTERIAL 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 bacteria³.

Bacterial conjunctivitis is a common disease worldwide, more frequent in children (2/3 of the cases) than in adults³.



Blurry vision



Itchy eyes



Red eyes



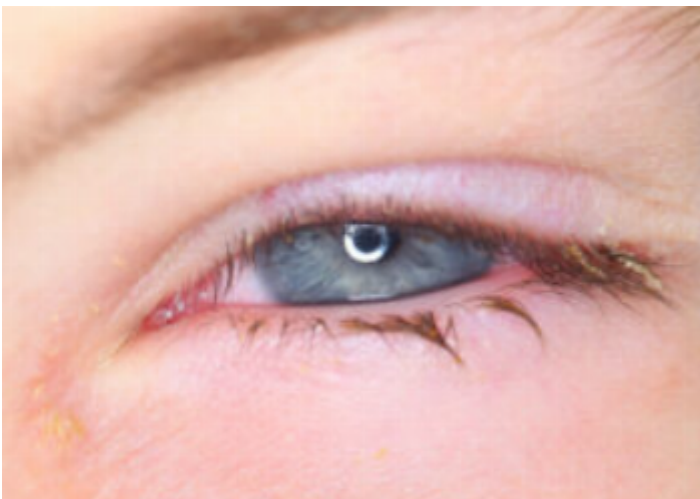
Sticky eyes

CAUSES

WHAT CAN CAUSE BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Bacterial conjunctivitis is a contagious disease, that most often occurs in otherwise healthy individuals³.

The infection may be transmitted from infected individuals or may result from an abnormal development of bacteria that are naturally present on the skin, in the nose or on the eye surface⁵.



Some risk factors increase the risk of bacteria transmission:

- **Poor hygienic habits** (especially not washing one's hand, as contaminated fingers are a common route of transmission of the bacteria in the eye⁵),
- **Contaminated cosmetics** (especially old ones and/or shared between several people⁴),
- **Crowded social conditions** such as schools, military barracks... that imply close contacts between individuals⁶.
- **Diseases and conditions** that weaken the ocular surface encourages bacteria to take hold and grow: dry eye, blepharitis, recent ocular surgery, ocular foreign bodies and chronic use of eyedrop medications⁶.
- **Conditions that compromise the immune defenses**, like diabetes⁷, favor all types of infections, including in the eye⁶.
- **Contact lens wear** is a common risk factor for bacterial eye infection, especially if: sleeping with the lenses, inadequate maintenance of contact lenses and contact lenses case, failing to discard the contact lenses in a timely manner, and

exposing the contact lenses to water (eg, swimming, showering, tap water) ³.

The most common pathogens for bacterial conjunctivitis in adults are staphylococcal species, mostly involved in skin and eye infections, followed by other bacteria that are otherwise mostly involved into respiratory common infections such as bronchitis, pneumonia ... ⁶

SYMPTOMS

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Bacterial conjunctivitis often starts in one eye, and spreads to the other eye within a few days ⁷.

It usually causes eye redness with a yellowish or greenish sticky discharge throughout the day. The eyelids may become swollen and stuck together when waking. Vision may be mildly blurred by secretions, but the visual acuity is not reduced ^{6,7}.

The course of the disease usually lasts 1 to 2 weeks ⁶.

Bacterial conjunctivitis seldom leads to complications. However, it may spread to the cornea (transparent membrane that covers the iris and pupillae at the center of the eye).

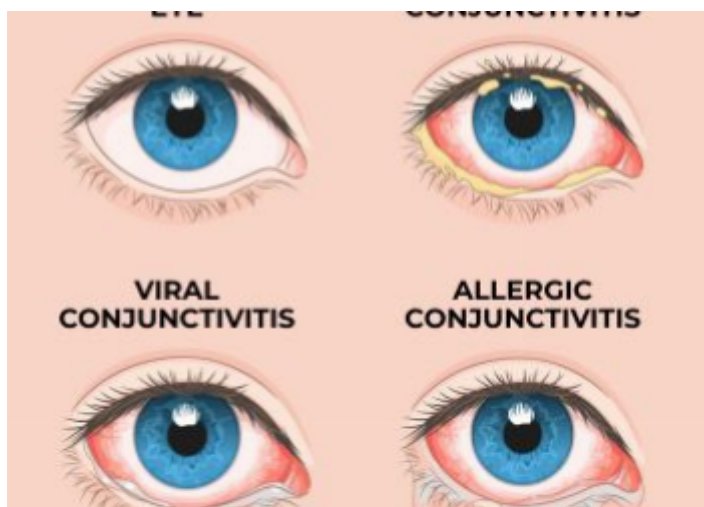
In people with recent eye surgery, the infection may also extend to the inner parts of the eye. Both situations may be sight threatening ³.

DIAGNOSTIC

HOW TO DIAGNOSE A BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS PROBLEM?

In the majority of cases it is a clinical diagnosis and does not require sampling for germ identification ⁶.

The diagnosis of bacterial conjunctivitis is clinical, based on the redness of the eye(s) with purulent discharge, which is strongly evocative of bacterial infection .



The bacterial origin of the conjunctivitis may be further suspected and distinguished from allergic and viral causes if the eyelids stick together, if there is no itching, no history of previous conjunctivitis, and in people wearing contact lenses .

If you consult an ophthalmologist, he or she will perform a thorough eye examination to assess the extent of the infection, or the possibility of another diagnosis. Sometimes a sampling of the eye secretions will be done to identify the bacteria et prescribe the appropriate treatment.

TREATMENT

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Most cases of acute bacterial conjunctivitis are self-limited and will clear within 10 days without treatment^{1,5,6}.

Treatment of bacterial conjunctivitis should primarily involve eyewash with saline and antiseptic eyedrops^{7,8}.

Eyedrops with antibiotics are often prescribed, although they do not improve the outcome, which is spontaneously good, but they may accelerate symptoms resolution and reduce the risk of contagion.

Conversely, to avoid unnecessary waste of antibiotics that may lose their efficacy if overused, guidelines claim that they should be reserved for severe forms or patients with risk factors or if the symptoms do not resolve after a few days with mere eyewash and antiseptic eyedrops^{3,8}.

In very specific cases, antibiotics in tablets may be prescribed³.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ALLERGIC AND INFECTIOUS CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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WHEN SHALL I SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION FOR BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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MAY I WEAR MAKEUP WHEN HAVING BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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MAY I WEAR MY CONTACT LENSES WITH BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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WHAT SHALL I DO TO AVOID TRANSMITTING OR CATCHING A BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS?

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