

PINK EYE (CONJUNCTIVITIS)

CAUSATIVE AGENT: May be a bacterial or viral infection, or may be due to allergy, contact with irritants (e.g. chlorine from swimming pool), or other causes.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS: Redness and swelling of the white of the eye or inside of eyelids of one or both eyes. May have a yellow discharge (bacterial or viral) or clear or no discharge (allergic or contact). Sometimes there will be crustiness along the edges of the eyelids upon awakening. Itching and/or pain may be present.

METHOD OF TRANSMISSION: Contact with the discharge from the infected person's eye through contaminated fingers, tissues, wash cloths, towels, pillowcases, make-up, clothing, or other articles.

INCUBATION PERIOD: Irregular, usually 1 to 4 days.

PERIOD OF COMMUNICABILITY: Bacterial and viral infections are highly communicable when discharge is present. **School policy excludes children from attendance during acute infection with pus discharge.**

PREVENTION: To prevent pinkeye caused by infections, teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water. Keeping their hands away from their face and eyes is essential in controlling the spread. Remind them that they should not share pillowcases, washcloths, towels, tissues, eye makeup, or eye drops with other people.

TREATMENT: Children with Bacterial Conjunctivitis should be on antibiotics for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. Children with viral or other types of conjunctivitis may return to school with a note from a physician.

For more information contact your health care provider, your school nurse, the Marin County Health Department, or go to <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Conjunctivitis/>.

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