Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)

Tacoma - Pierce County Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Feb. 2015

Communicable Disease Division
3629 South D Street, Tacoma, WA 98418
(253) 798-6410 (phone) • (253) 798-7666 (fax)

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have recently been exposed to **conjunctivitis**, commonly called **pinkeye**. Pinkeye is common among children and is usually caused by a virus or bacteria, but may be caused by an allergen or some other eye irritant. Pinkeye is an inflammation of the thin tissue covering the white part of the eye and the inside of the eyelids.

What are the symptoms of pinkeye?
Symptoms may include redness, itching and burning of the eyes, watering or discharge from the eyes, eyelids that stick together and swollen eyelids. It may affect one or both eyes.

How is pinkeye spread?
Pinkeye caused by a virus or bacteria may spread when hands become contaminated by direct contact with discharge from the infected eye, or by touching surfaces that have been contaminated by the secretions from the child's eye. Touching one's eye with unwashed hands is a common way for viruses and bacteria to enter the eye.

How is pinkeye diagnosed and treated?
A healthcare provider will make the diagnosis of conjunctivitis through direct observation of the infected eye(s). Bacterial conjunctivitis (e.g., redness *and* white or yellow discharge) is treated with antibiotic eye drops. Viral conjunctivitis (e.g., clear, watery eye discharge without eye pain or redness) does not respond to antibiotics and is treated with cool, wet compresses.

How do you control the spread?
- Careful and thorough handwashing before and after touching the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Careful disinfection of objects that are commonly touched by hands or faces such as table, doorknobs, telephones, and toys.
- People with white or yellow discharge should see their healthcare provider for assessment before returning to school.

How do I get more information?
For more information about pinkeye, contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press "0".