

Viral and bacterial conjunctivitis (pink eye) are very contagious. They can spread easily from person to person. You can greatly reduce the risk of getting conjunctivitis or spreading it to someone else by following some simple steps for good hygiene.

If You Have Conjunctivitis

If you have conjunctivitis, you can help limit its spread to other people by following these steps:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Wash them especially well before and after cleaning, or applying eye drops or ointment to, your infected eye. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes. This can worsen the condition or spread it to your other eye.
- With clean hands, wash any discharge from around your eye(s) several times a day using a clean, wet washcloth or fresh cotton ball. Throw away cotton balls after use, and wash used washcloths with hot water and detergent, then wash your hands again with soap and warm water.
- Do not use the same eye drop dispenser/bottle for your infected and non-infected eyes.
- Wash pillowcases, sheets, washcloths, and towels often in hot water and detergent; wash your hands after handling such items.
- Stop wearing contact lenses until your eye doctor says it's okay to start wearing them again.
- Clean eyeglasses, being careful not to contaminate items (like hand towels) that might be shared by other people.
- Clean, store, and replace your contact lenses as instructed by your eye doctor.
- Do not share personal items, such as pillows, washcloths, towels, eye drops, eye or face makeup, makeup brushes, contact lenses, contact lens storage cases, or eyeglasses.

- Do not use swimming pools.

If You Are Around Someone with Conjunctivitis

If you are around someone with conjunctivitis, you can reduce your risk of infection by following these steps:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and warm water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.
- Wash your hands after contact with an infected person or items he or she uses; for example, wash your hands after applying eye drops or ointment to an infected person's eye(s) or after putting their bed linens in the washing machine.
- Avoid touching your eyes with unwashed hands.
- Do not share items used by an infected person; for example, do not share pillows, washcloths, towels, eye drops, eye or face makeup, makeup brushes, contact lenses, contact lens storage cases, or eyeglasses.

Avoid Getting Sick Again

In addition, if you have conjunctivitis, there are steps you can take to avoid re-infection once the infection goes away:

- Throw away and replace any eye or face makeup or makeup brushes you used while infected.
- Throw away disposable contact lenses and cases that you used while your eyes were infected.
- Throw away contact lens solutions that you used while your eyes were infected.
- Clean extended wear lenses as directed.
- Clean eyeglasses and cases that you used while infected.