York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Conjunctivitis

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

Scarborough Eye Clinic on 01723 342215
Scarborough Hospital
Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

York Eye Clinic on 01904 726758
York Hospital
Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

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What is conjunctivitis?

This is an inflammation of the clear transparent membrane covering the white part of the eye – the conjunctiva.

What causes conjunctivitis?

There are five main causes:

- Bacterial
- Viral
- Atopic (This includes seasonal hayfever)
- Chlamydia infection
- Allergy e.g. to drops or makeup

What are the symptoms?

Sore, itchy red eyes with either a sticky or watery discharge (dependent on cause). Eyelids may be stuck together in the morning.

What is the treatment?

This will vary depending on the causes. You will probably already have had at least one course of eye drops or ointment before being referred to the eye clinic.

You may have some eye swabs taken to determine the type of conjunctivitis. A special type of cotton bud will be rubbed along the inner surface of the eyelid. Some of the results will be available within a few days; others can take a few weeks. We will contact you if we need to change your treatment.

Bacterial conjunctivitis usually clears up quickly with antibiotics.

A viral conjunctivitis often associated with cough, colds or sore throat can take several weeks to clear and there is no treatment – like the common cold.
The doctor may prescribe artificial tears, which will make the eye more comfortable and or antibiotic ointment to prevent a secondary bacterial infection.
Very occasionally steroids may be prescribed to reduce symptoms. This will require review in the eye clinic while you are taking them to monitor for side effects.

Those with atopic conjunctivitis may be given anti-allergy eyedrops to make the eye more comfortable.

Occasionally steroids are used in the short term and will require you to come in for monitoring of any side effects.

If you have allergic conjunctivitis the management will depend on any identified cause.

If you are found to have a chlamydial form of conjunctivitis, then you may need to be referred to the sexual health clinic.

It is very important that you attend for treatment, as there is a high probability that you will also have a genital infection with chlamydia.

This can be transmitted to others during sexual intercourse and in women, can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which can lead to sterility and ectopic pregnancy. It is very common and easily treated.

www.yorsexualhealth.org.uk
Monkgate Health Centre 01904 721111

Is conjunctivitis infectious?

Other than allergic disease it can be, so it is advisable to carry out the following while you have symptoms:

- Wash your hands thoroughly after touching your eyes, especially before and after putting your drops or ointment in.
- Use tissues if you need to wipe your eyes and dispose of this immediately.
- Do not share face flannels or face towels with others.
- Do not share or lend others your make up.
- Do not wear your contact lenses.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact Eye Clinic, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 726758 or email yhs-tr.ophthalmologyyorkadminstaff@nhs.net

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

Owner	Sarah Anderson, Consultant Ophthalmologist
Date first issued	April 2005
Review Date	October 2028
Version	6 (reissued October 2025)
Approved by	Department of Ophthalmology
Document Reference	PIL 303 v6.2

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