



National Institute of Health - Pakistan
(Center for Disease Control)

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National Focal Point for IHR



No: F.1-22/Advisory/CDC/2023

Islamabad, 04th October 2023

Subject: Advisory for the Prevention and Control of Conjunctivitis

Purpose:

Viral conjunctivitis, also called "pink eye" is a highly contagious acute conjunctival infection usually caused by an adenovirus. Symptoms include irritation, photophobia, and watery discharge. Infection is self-limited, but severe cases may require therapy. Viral Conjunctivitis cases surge has been witnessed in some parts of the country since past few weeks. The purpose of this advisory is to provide health information for mitigating the risk factors associated with transmission of disease. It is imperative to undertake immediate and long-term preventive measures, National Institute of Health is issuing this advisory to alert and sensitize the health professionals to be vigilant and timely detect and treat the cases of viral Conjunctivitis and prevent its further transmission in the community.

The information about the illness is summarized below:

Clinical Picture:

After an incubation period of about 12 hours to 12 days, conjunctival hyperemia, watery discharge, and ocular irritation usually begin in one eye and spread rapidly to the other. Follicles may be present on the palpebral conjunctiva. A preauricular lymph node is often enlarged and painful. Usually, symptoms begin with excess tearing and irritation of the eye, causing the white area (sclera) of the eyes to appear pink or red in color. It is followed by swelling of the eyelids, photophobia (light sensitivity), and green or yellow discharge (pus or crusty eyes), foreign body sensation leading to urge for rubbing. Conjunctivitis spreads through contact with discharge from: the eyes, upper respiratory tracts of infected persons, contaminated fingers, clothing, and other objects including shared makeup applicators that come in contact with the eye. It is easily spread by contaminated hands.

There is no cure for viral conjunctivitis. Recovery can begin within days, although the symptoms frequently get worse for the first three to five days, with gradual improvement over the following one to two weeks for a total course of two to three weeks.

The case definition for suspected Conjunctivitis:

1. Any person, suffering from redness of eyes including excessive tearing, irritation without other apparent cause or disease like contact lens, injury, medication etc.
2. A suspected person having history of contact (direct or indirect) or interaction with patient with conjunctivitis

Treatment:

Treatment is mostly supportive. Viral conjunctivitis is self-limiting, lasting 1 week in mild cases to up to 3 weeks in severe cases.

Any Suspected Conjunctivitis case should be quarantines/isolated for 05 to 7 days at their residence

- The infection will usually clear up in 7 to 14 days without treatment and without any long-term consequences.
- Cleaning the eyes with water and a clean cloth or sterile pad, applying warm or cool

compresses, and using lubricating eye drops, also known as artificial tears, may help to relieve symptoms.

- Applying antihistamine/decongestant eye drops, may help to reduce irritation.
- Antibiotics are not useful for treating viral conjunctivitis. Severe cases of conjunctivitis are referred for ophthalmic consultation, and topical nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and corticosteroids may be considered. These medications, however, are not approved for use in the primary care clinic due to the potential for significant side effects including cataract formation and increased intra ocular pressure leading to glaucoma. It should be noted that in cases of adenoviral conjunctivitis, topical steroids may alleviate the symptoms but prolong the infective period. Complicated cases must be referred to an ophthalmologist.
- Furthermore, if viral conjunctivitis occurs in newborn babies or people with weakened immune systems, such as those who have HIV or are undergoing treatment for cancer, it can be severe, and medical advice should be sought without delay.

Prevention Measures for Conjunctivitis:

All Viral conjunctivitis patients are encouraged to be self-quarantined /isolated for the duration of symptoms, and:

- Seek medical care immediately if symptoms get worsened
- As per directions of the doctor, isolate in the hospital or at residence and avoid contacts with others.
- Cover eyes with goggles in order to reduce photophobia symptoms
- Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or the inner crook of your elbow in order to avoid contamination of your hands
- Wash hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Avoid sharing personal belongings including towel, makeup, linens with others
- Children with conjunctivitis should be kept home from school for the duration of symptoms to avoid further spreading the infection.

Physicians may take the following precautions to avoid transmitting infection to other patients:

- Use hand sanitizer or wash their hands properly, rinse well, and turn off the water using a paper towel.
- Disinfect equipment after examining patients

For any further assistance in this context, the center for Disease control (CDC), NIH (051 – 9255566 and Fax No. 051-9255099) may be contacted.

This advisory may please be widely distributed among all concerned and NIH may please be kept informed of the measures undertaken in respective areas of jurisdiction.


(Muazam Abbas Ranjha)
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