



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

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National Focal Point for IHR



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Subject: Advisory for the Prevention and Control of Conjunctivitis

Purpose

Viral conjunctivitis, commonly known as "pink eye," is a highly contagious eye infection. Caused by a virus, usually an adenovirus, leads to irritation, light sensitivity, and watery discharge. While symptoms are typically mild and self-limiting, the recent surge in cases in some parts of the country—particularly following recent floods requires immediate action. This advisory from the National Institute of Health (NIH) is issued to inform and equip health professionals and the public with the necessary measures to prevent and control the spread of this disease. The information about the illness is summarized below:

Understanding the Illness:

Symptoms: After an incubation period of up to 12 days, symptoms often begin in one eye and quickly spread to the other. The white area of the eye (sclera) becomes pink or red, with watery or pus-like discharge. Other common symptoms include a feeling of grittiness, swollen eyelids, and sensitivity to light (photophobia).

Transmission: The virus spreads very easily through contact with eye discharge from an infected person, contaminated hands, or shared personal items like towels, bedding, and makeup.

Course of Illness: There is no cure for viral conjunctivitis. The infection will usually clear up on its own. Symptoms may worsen for the first few days before gradually improving over one to two weeks.

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.

Suspected Case

Any person with a pink or red eye, excessive tearing, and irritation, without any other obvious cause like an injury or contact lens use, should be considered a suspected case. This is especially true if they have recently been in contact with someone who has the infection.

Treatment and Management:

Treatment is focused on relieving symptoms. The infection usually resolves on its own within 7 to 14 days.

- Apply warm or cool compresses and use lubricating eye drops (artificial tears) to help ease discomfort.
- Do not use antibiotics, as they are ineffective against viral infections.
- Severe cases or those that do not improve should be referred to an ophthalmologist.

Key Prevention Measures for Everyone

- **Isolate Suspected Cases:** Anyone with symptoms should stay home for 5 to 7 days to prevent spreading the infection.
- **Practice Hand Hygiene:** Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- **Avoid Touching Face:** Do not touch or rub eyes.
- **Do Not Share Personal Items:** Avoid sharing towels, pillows, handkerchiefs, makeup, or eye drops with others.
- **Keep Children Home:** Children with conjunctivitis should not attend school or daycare until their symptoms have resolved.

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Special Considerations for Flood-Affected Areas:

Flooding significantly increases the risk of viral conjunctivitis transmission due to crowded living conditions and widespread contamination:

- **Contaminated Water:** Floodwaters are often mixed with sewage and other waste, creating a high-risk environment. Avoid contact with floodwater.
- **Eye Protection:** Wear goggles or protective eyewear if you must come into contact with floodwater.
- **Use Clean Water:** Always wash your hands and face with clean, boiled, or disinfected water. Do not use floodwater for any personal hygiene.
- **Hygiene Supplies:** Community leaders and relief workers should ensure the distribution of soap, hand sanitizer, and clean clothes in relief camps and affected areas.
- **Prompt Isolation:** In temporary shelters, set up designated isolation areas for individuals with symptoms to prevent outbreaks.

Guidance for Healthcare Professionals:

- Use proper hand hygiene, including hand sanitizer or soap and water, before and after examining each patient.
- Thoroughly disinfect all medical equipment and surfaces after each patient examination.

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.