

EYE INFECTION WITH PUS (BACTERIAL)

DESCRIPTION

- yellow discharge in the eye
- eyelids stuck together with pus, especially after sleeping
- dried eye discharge on the upper cheek
- white part of eyes may or may not have some redness or pinkness
- eyelids usually puffy due to irritation from the infection

This condition is also called bacterial conjunctivitis, runny eyes, or matted eyes.

Note: A small amount of cream-colored mucus in the inner corner of the eyes after sleeping is normal.

CAUSE

Eye infections with pus are caused by bacterial and can be a complication of a cold. Pink eyes without a yellow discharge, however, are more common and are usually due to a virus.

EXPECTED COURSE

With proper treatment the yellow discharge should clear up in 72 hours. The red eyes (which are due to the cold) may persist for several more days.

HOME TREATMENT

1. Cleaning the eye

Before putting in any medicines, remove all the pus from the eye with warm water and wet cotton balls. Unless this is done, the medicine will not have a chance to work.

2. Antibiotic eye drops or ointments

Bacterial conjunctivitis must be treated with an antibiotic medicine. Whether oral medication, drops, or ointments, follow the instructions given. Oral antibiotics may be used to treat eye infections in the younger child, but if no improvement after 2-3 days, then antibiotic drops or ointments may be necessary. Antibiotic drops or ointments may work more quickly (and lead to less antibiotic resistance) than oral antibiotics, but if continued fever or fussiness in a child less 3 years old, a recheck in clinic should be considered.

Putting eye drops or ointment in the eyes of young children can be a real battle. Ideally it's done with two adults. One person can hold the child still while the other person opens the eyelids with one hand and puts in the medicine with the other. One person can do it alone if she sits on the floor holding the child's head (face up) between the knees to free both hands to put in the medication.

If your physician has prescribed antibiotic eye drops, you may need to put up to two drops in each eye every 2 hours while your child is awake. Do this by gently pulling down on the lower lid and placing the drops there. As soon as the eye drops have been put in the eyes, have your child close them for up to 2 minutes (or as long as possible) so the eye drops will stay inside. If it is difficult to separate your child's eyelids, put the eye drops over the inner corner of the eye while he is lying down. When your child opens his eye and blinks, the eye drops will flow in. Continue the eye drops until your child has awakened two mornings in a row without any pus in the eye.

If your physician has prescribed antibiotic ointment, the ointment needs to be used up to four times a day. Separate the eyelids and put in a ribbon of ointment along the lower eyelid from one corner of the eye to the

other. If it is very difficult to separate your child's eyelids, put the ointment on the edges of the eyelids. As the ointment melts from body heat, it will flow onto the eyeball. Continue until two mornings have passed without any pus in the eye.

3. Contact lenses

Children with contact lenses need to switch to glasses temporarily. This will prevent damage to the cornea.

4. Contagiousness

The pus from the eyes can cause eye infections in other people if they get some of it on their eyes. Therefore, it is very important for the sick child to have his own washcloth and towel. He should be encouraged not to touch or rub his eyes because it can make his infection last longer. Touching his eyes also puts a lot of germs on his fingers. Your child's hands should be washed often to prevent spreading the infection.

After using eye drops for 24 hours, and if the pus is minimal, children can return to day care or school.

Call your child's physician IMMEDIATELY if:

- The outer eyelids become very red or swollen
- The vision becomes blurred
- Your child starts acting very sick

Call your child's physician within 24 hours if:

- The infection isn't cleared up after 3 days of treatments
- Your child develops an earache
- You have other concerns or questions