

Your treatment: \_\_\_\_\_

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Return to the clinic if acutely worse,

not improving in 3 days, or symptoms

persist \_\_\_\_\_

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**Pat Walker Health Center**

**(479) 575-4451**

**TTY for hearing impaired**

**(479) 575-4124**

**Mission Statement**

The Pat Walker Health Center, University Health Services provides professional and comprehensive medical care, mental health care, health education, and health promotion for a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. We, the University Health Services Staff of the Pat Walker Health Center, have a commitment to physical, mental, spiritual, social, and emotional health, the highest standards of quality, and appreciation of the value of each individual. Through these endeavors we support the educational mission of the University of Arkansas and the growth of each individual.

**Pat Walker Health Center  
University Health Services**

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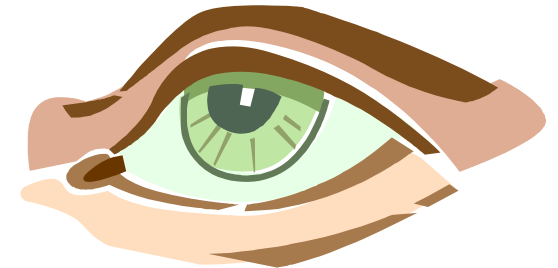
**UNIVERSITY of ARKANSAS**

1871



**University Health Services**

**Disorders of the  
Conjunctiva**



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The conjunctiva is the thin, tough lining that covers the back of the eyelid and loops back to cover the sclera (the white of the eye). The conjunctiva helps protect the eye from foreign objects and infection but can itself become irritated by chemicals or allergic reactions or infected by viruses or bacteria. These conditions generally produce pain, itching, and redness on the surface of the eye.

## Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, usually caused by viruses, bacteria, or an allergy.

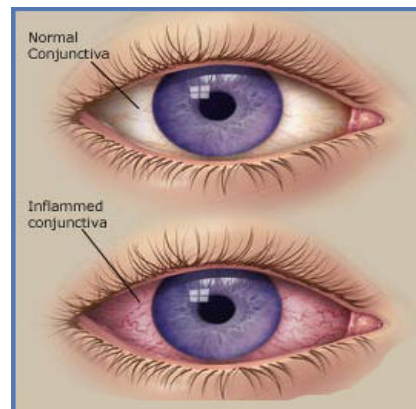
The conjunctivitis can be inflamed by an allergic reaction to dust, mold, animal dander, or pollen and can be irritated by wind, dust, smoke, and other types of air pollution. It may also be irritated by a common cold or a bout of measles. The ultraviolet light of an electric welding arc, sunlamp, or even bright sunlight reflected by snow can irritate the conjunctiva.

Sometimes, conjunctivitis can last for months or years. This type of conjunctivitis may be caused by conditions in which an eyelid is turned outward (extropion) or inward (entropion), problems with the tear ducts, sensitivity to chemicals, exposure to irritants, and infection by particular bacteria—typically Chlamydia.

## Symptoms & Diagnosis

When irritated, the conjunctiva becomes bloodshot, and a discharge often appears in the eye. In bacterial conjunctivitis, the discharge may be thick and white or creamy. In viral or allergic conjunctivitis, the discharge is usually clear. The eyelid may swell and itch intensely, especially in allergic conjunctivitis.

Usually conjunctivitis is easy to recognize because it commonly occurs with a cold or allergies. Sometimes, however, conjunctivitis resembles iritis, a more severe eye inflammation, or even acute glaucoma – serious conditions that can lead to a loss of vision. A doctor can usually distinguish the diseases. With the more serious eye conditions, the blood vessels closest to the colored part of the eye (iris) are very inflamed. Although conjunctivitis may cause a burning sensation, it's usually less painful than the more serious conditions. Conjunctivitis almost never affects vision unless the discharge temporarily covers the cornea.



## Treatment

Treatment for conjunctivitis depends on the cause. The eyelids should be gently bathed with tap water and a clean washcloth to keep them clean and free of discharge. If the cause is a bacterial infection, antibiotic eye drops or ointment may be prescribed. Sometimes the doctor takes a small sample of discharge with a cotton-tipped applicator for testing in a laboratory, and then adjusts the prescription according to the test results. Corticosteroid eye drops aren't used with antibiotics and should never be used by someone who might have a herpes infection because corticosteroids tend to make herpes worse.

Antibiotics don't help allergic or viral conjunctivitis. Antihistamines taken orally may relieve the itching and irritation. If not, Corticosteroid eye drops can help.

Because infective conjunctivitis is highly contagious, a person should wash the hands before and after bathing the eye or applying medication to it. Also, a person should be careful not to touch the other eye. Towels and washcloths used to clean the eye should be kept separate from other towels and washcloths. Change pillowcases daily. Surgery may be needed to correct the alignment of the eyelids or to open clogged tear ducts.

