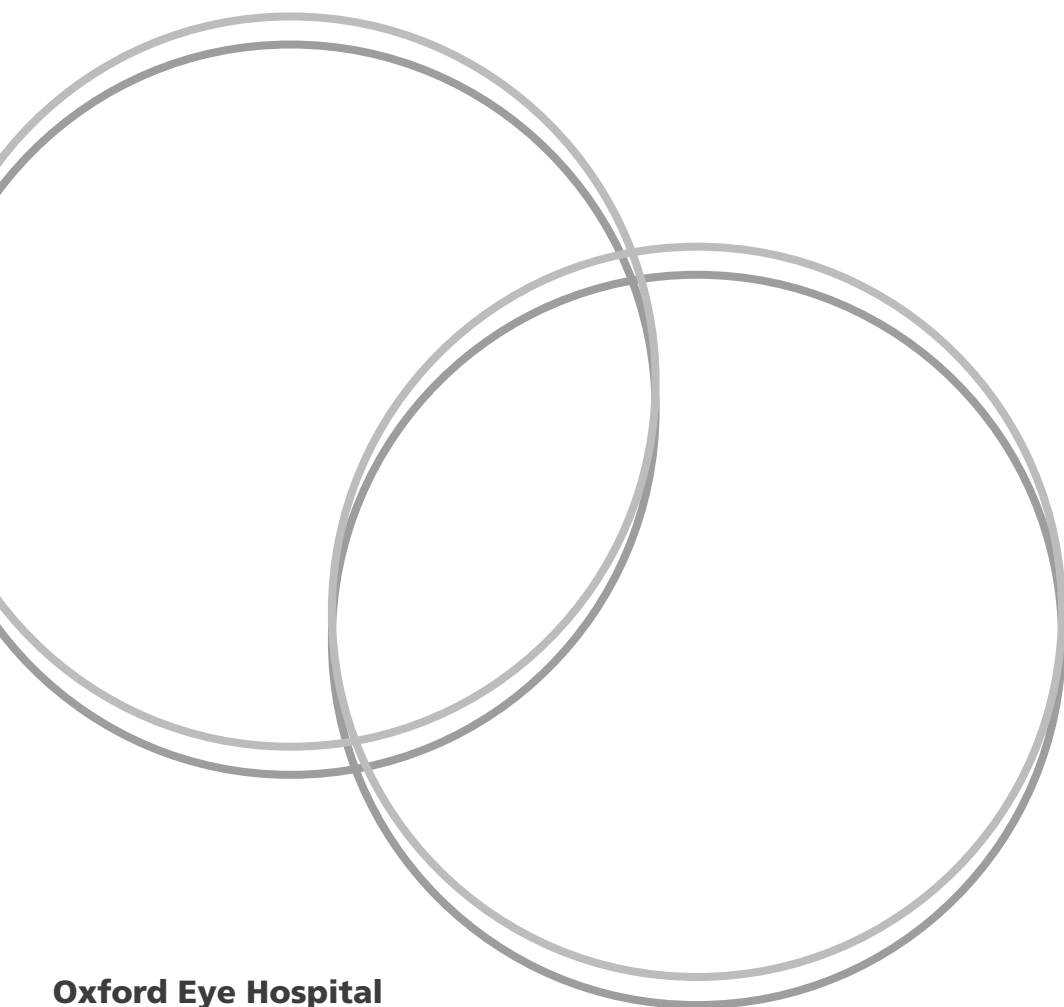




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Treatment for conjunctivitis

Information for patients



Oxford Eye Hospital

What is conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is an infection of the conjunctiva (the 'skin' which covers the white of the eye and lines the eyelids). It is a common infection and in most cases it will clear up on its own in 7 to 10 days.

There are several causes of conjunctivitis, but in most cases it is caused by common bacteria, and by viruses which also cause the common cold.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Sore, gritty, red eyes, and discharge which may be watery or sticky (depending on the cause), making the eyes sticky in the mornings.

What is the treatment?

If the doctor diagnoses bacterial conjunctivitis, swabs may be taken from your eye and sent to a laboratory to confirm the diagnosis. In the meantime you may be given antibiotic drops or ointment, lubricating eye drops or some medicines to take by mouth depending on the infection suspected.

The results may take several weeks to come back from the laboratory. We will contact you if the results show that you need medicines to treat it.

- Bacterial conjunctivitis is easily treated with antibiotic drops or ointment.
- There is no treatment for viral conjunctivitis. It will gradually clear up on its own, but the doctor may prescribe antibiotic drops or ointment to prevent you from getting a secondary bacterial infection.
- You may also be advised to use lubricating eye drops.

For certain types of conjunctivitis, you may need to be referred to a different clinical team for them to trace any people you may have been in contact with so they can be treated.

Conjunctivitis is infectious, so it is important that you follow these instructions:

1. Keep your face flannel and face towels separate from those of the rest of the family.
2. Wash your hands thoroughly after touching your eyes.
3. Use tissues if you need to wipe your eyes, and dispose of them immediately afterwards.
4. Under no circumstances allow anyone else to use your eye drops or ointment. Throw them away when your treatment is finished. Never keep used bottles.

Follow-up

You do not need a follow-up appointment. However, if the antibiotics do not resolve the problem within 3 to 5 days or you have any questions concerning your eye condition, please call our Emergency Eye Department Telephone Triage line on: **01865 234 567** option 1.

You will speak to a clinical member of staff who will be able to give advice or arrange a review if clinically required.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Audrey Mykula, Consultant Ophthalmologist
January 2025
Review: January 2028
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

