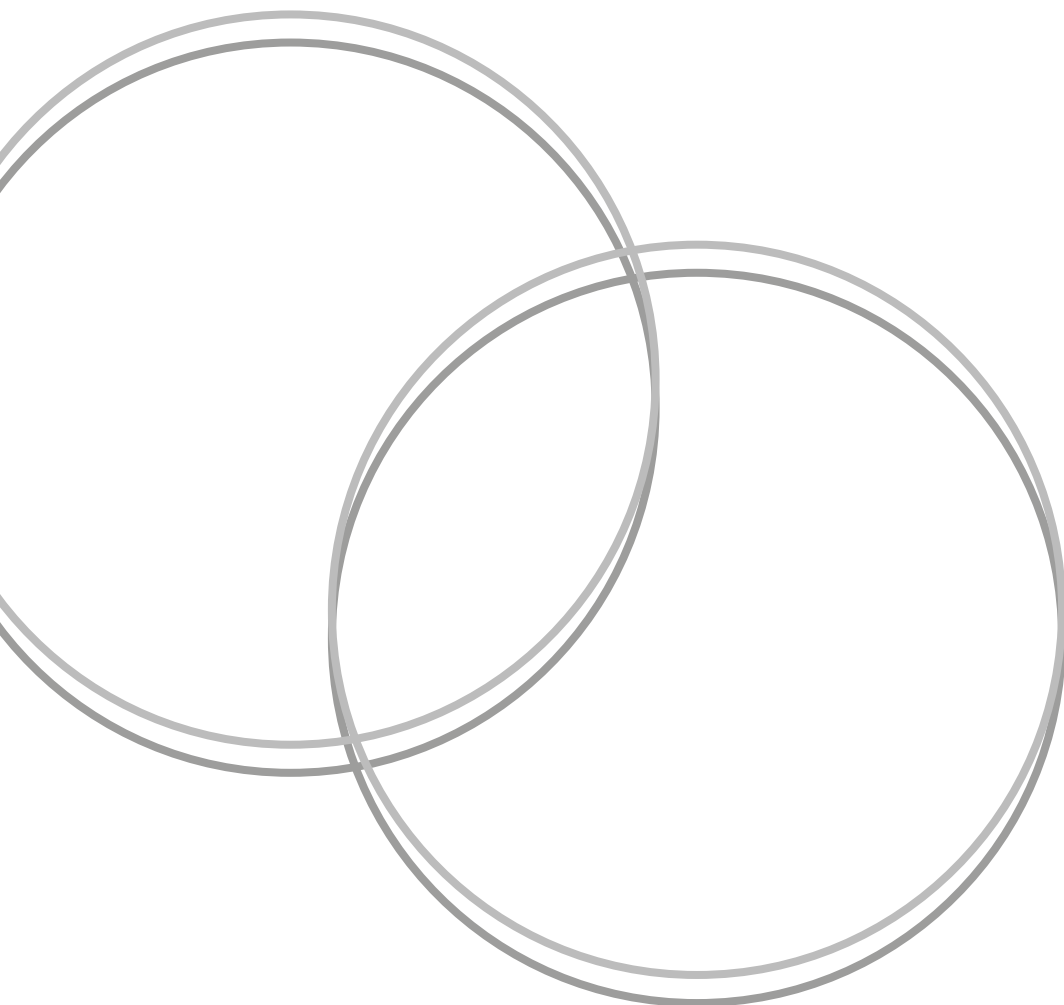


Allergic Conjunctivitis

Information for patients



What is conjunctivitis?

The conjunctiva is a thin, transparent layer that covers the white part of the eye and lines the inside of the eyelids.

Conjunctivitis means inflammation of this membrane. It can be caused by:

- Allergy (allergic conjunctivitis)

Infection from bacteria or viruses (infective conjunctivitis)

What are the symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis?

Allergic conjunctivitis usually affects both eyes. Symptoms may include:

- Red, itchy and watery eyes
- Sore or gritty feeling in the eyes
- Swollen eyelids
- Blurred vision due to excessive watering

You may also have hay fever symptoms such as sneezing or a runny nose. Symptoms can last for weeks or months depending on what triggers them.

What causes allergic conjunctivitis?

Allergies happen when the immune system reacts to harmless things such as dust mites, grass, pollen, or animal hair. You are more likely to be affected if you have allergies yourself or a family history of allergies.

Seasonal allergies usually worsen in spring and summer when pollen levels are high. Allergies to household triggers such as dust mites or pets can cause symptoms all year round.

Allergy testing is not usually helpful for this condition.

Treatment options

- Avoid rubbing your eyes since it makes symptoms worse.
- Cold compresses can help reduce eyelid swelling and discomfort.
- Lubricating eye drops or ointment can soothe the eyes though they do not treat the allergy.
- Anti-allergy eye drops may help control inflammation and itching. Most are available over the counter. They need to be used every day and may take up to two weeks to work. Some people only need them during pollen seasons while others need them year-round.
- Antihistamine tablets can help control general allergy symptoms. They are available from pharmacies. Always check the manufacturer's leaflet and seek advice from a pharmacist or GP if unsure.
- Steroid eye drops may be needed if symptoms remain severe. They require a prescription and must be monitored by an eye specialist.
- Other specialist eye drops (e.g. ciclosporin) may be recommended if symptoms are ongoing or difficult to control. These drops help to reduce inflammation on the surface of the eye and are usually prescribed and monitored by an eye specialist.

Contact lens advice

Do not wear contact lenses until your symptoms have fully settled.

When to seek urgent advice

You should seek help urgently if you experience:

- Persistent blurred vision
- Significant eye pain
- Sensitivity to light
- Symptoms in only one eye that worsen quickly

Contacting us

If you have a minor eye problem, please seek advice from your GP, optician or pharmacist.

Call our specialist telephone triage number if you need URGENT help or advice or if you notice:

- Redness and/or swelling of your eye lids and/or eyeball
- Any loss of sight
- Intense pain

Tel: **01865 234 567**

(select the option for “Eye Emergencies”)

Monday to Friday

8:30am – 4:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

8:30am – 3:30pm (including Bank Holidays)

You will be able to speak to an ophthalmic health professional who will advise you.

If you need advice out of hours, please phone NHS 111 or your out of hours GP practice.

Further information

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk

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.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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