

Clear Advice: Preventing Conjunctivitis

As your windows to the world, your eyes are often taken for granted. However, eyecare should be part of a healthy lifestyle. One common eye infection that can easily be avoided is conjunctivitis, or pink eye.

“Conjunctivitis is typically caused by bacterial or viral infections among children, although it may also appear in adults,” explains the Kansas Association of Osteopathic Medicine (KAOM) “The infection causes an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the transparent lining covering the white part of your eye, and makes it appear pink. This is why the infection is often called pink eye.”

In addition to the redness in the white part of the eye, KAOM explains that sufferers may notice other symptoms like red, swollen eyelids and a gritty irritation in the eye. KAOM also says that many patients experience a heightened sensitivity to light.

“When it comes to recognizing the condition, the most common symptom that people tend to notice is the discharge that makes the eyelids seal during sleep,” says KAOM “If you experience the discharge, check the color. If it is clear, the infection is due to an allergy. If it is green or yellow, the discharge is due to an infection.”

KAOM *e* explains that if patients suspect that they have caught conjunctivitis, they should:

- Avoid rubbing the eyes;
- Apply a cold or warm compress several times a day to reduce inflammation in the eyes;
- Avoid wearing contact lenses or eye make-up; and
- Discard any eye make-up that may have been used during the infection.

If the symptoms persist more than 24 hours, KAOM says that individuals should seek medical attention. KAOM also advises seeing a doctor immediately if the symptoms

occur in a child less than two months old.

“Your family physician will usually prescribe an eye drop medication that you will apply in both eyes for approximately a week,” KAOM says.

KAOM cautions patients to avoid letting the eye drop bottle touch any part of the eye when applying the dosage. KAOM recommends that older children and adults follow these simple steps when applying eye drops:

1. Pull down the lower eye lid with two fingers to create a pouch.
2. Squeeze the eye drops into the pocket and then gently close the eyes allowing the liquid to move throughout the eye.

For a young child, KAOM recommends lying the child down on his or her back. With the child’s eyes closed, place the eye drops in the duct of each eye. Then ask the child to open his or her eyes to allow the liquid to flow into the eyes.

“While treatment is relatively simple, prevention is even easier,” explains KAOM. To prevent catching pink eye, KAOM recommends practicing good hygiene by not using other people’s face towels or make-up. In addition, people should remember to wear protective eyewear like sunglasses on dusty or windy days and avoid any substances that have been proven to spark allergies in the past.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) provide. Osteopathic physicians are fully-licensed to prescribe medicine and practice in all specialty areas including surgery. D.O.s are trained to consider the health of the whole person and use their hands to help diagnose and treat their patients.