



Ythan Opticians

Professional Eye Care

Conjunctivitis

What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the delicate surface membrane that normally forms a thin, transparent covering across the eye and folds back up inside the eyelid.

Causes

The most common cause of infectious conjunctivitis, especially in older children, is a virus. Bacterial infections can also cause conjunctivitis and other common irritants include household chemicals, grit and plant allergens.

Symptoms

Conjunctivitis causes redness of the conjunctiva (the white of the eye and inside the eyelids), usually of both eyes. The eyes may be sore, itchy, burning and sometimes extremely painful. Bright light can make the condition seem worse.

If the cause is a bacterial infection, the eye may discharge a white/yellow sticky pus. This can crust on the eyelashes and glue the eyelids together, especially after sleep.

If an allergen is causing the conjunctivitis, the eyes may be swollen, itchy and produce a thin, watery discharge.

All children are vulnerable, although the causes vary with age.

Treatment

With newborn babies, simply cleaning the eyes may be all that's needed to help the condition settle. Bacterial conjunctivitis, however, needs swift treatment with antibiotics, in the form of an ointment or drops.

Viral conjunctivitis in older children is less serious, but may still be treated with antibiotics if a bacterial cause can't be ruled out.

Allergic conjunctivitis is treated with anti-inflammatory eye drops. Gently bathing the eye and lashes with cooled boiled water may help.

Viral conjunctivitis usually lasts a matter of days and complications are extremely rare. Bacterial conjunctivitis can take several weeks to clear up.