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## Prevention

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### Preventing the Spread of Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis caused by allergens is not contagious; however, viral and bacterial conjunctivitis can be easily spread from person to person and can cause epidemics. You can greatly reduce the risk of getting conjunctivitis or of passing it on to someone else by following some simple good hygiene steps.

If you have infectious (viral or bacterial) conjunctivitis, you can help limit its spread to other people by following these steps:



- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. (See CDC's Clean Hands Save Lives! (<http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/>) Web site for tips on proper hand washing.)
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.
- Wash any discharge from around the eyes several times a day. Hands should be washed first and then a clean washcloth or fresh cotton ball or tissue can be used to cleanse the eye area. Throw away cotton balls or tissues after use; if a washcloth is used, it should be washed with hot water and detergent. Wash your hands with soap and warm water when done.
- Wash hands after applying eye drops or ointment.
- Do not use the same eye drop dispenser/bottle for infected and non-infected eyes—even for the

same person.

- Wash pillowcases, sheets, washcloths, and towels in hot water and detergent; hands should be washed after handling such items.
- Avoid sharing articles like towels, blankets, and pillowcases.
- Clean eyeglasses, being careful not to contaminate items (like towels) that might be shared by other people.
- Do not share eye makeup, face make-up, make-up brushes, contact lenses and containers, or eyeglasses.
- Do not use swimming pools.

If you are around someone with infectious (viral or bacterial) conjunctivitis, you can reduce your risk of infection by following these steps:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and warm water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. (See CDC's Clean Hands Save Lives! (<http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/>) Web site for tips on proper hand washing.)
- Wash your hands after contact with an infected person or items he or she uses; for example, wash your hands after applying eye drops or ointment to an infected person's eye(s) or after putting their bed linens in the washing machine.
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.
- Do not share items used by an infected person; for example, do not share pillows, washcloths, towels, eye drops, eye or face makeup, and eyeglasses.
- Clean and handle your contact lenses as instructed by your eye doctor.

In addition, if you have infectious conjunctivitis, there are steps you can take to avoid re-infection once the infection goes away:

- Throw away and replace any eye or face makeup you used while infected.
- Replace contact lens solutions that you used while your eyes were infected.
- Throw away disposable contact lenses and cases that were used while your eyes were infected.
- Clean extended wear lenses as directed.
- Clean eyeglasses and cases that were used while infected.

There is no vaccine that prevents all types of conjunctivitis. However, there are vaccines to protect against a few viral and bacterial diseases — rubella (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/rubella/default.htm>),


[measles \(http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/default.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/default.htm), [chickenpox \(http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/varicella/default.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/varicella/default.htm), [shingles \(http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/default.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/default.htm), [pneumococcal \(http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pneumo/default.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pneumo/default.htm) and [\*Haemophilus influenzae\* type b \(Hib\) \(http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hib/default.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hib/default.htm) disease that are associated with conjunctivitis.

## Related Pages

**CDC Features — Wash Your Hands**  
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HandWashing/>)

**Prevention and Treatment of Conjunctivitis in Newborns** ([../newborns.html#d](http://www.cdc.gov/newborns.html#d))

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