Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

What is conjunctivitis?
Conjunctivitis, also called pink eye, is an inflammation of the tissue that lines the eye and inner surface of the eyelid. It makes the “white” of the eye appear pink or red. Other symptoms of pink eye can include a gritty feeling in the eyes, itching, and a watery or yellow discharge that often forms a crust during sleep.

Conjunctivitis can be caused by a bacterial infection, viral infection or an allergic reaction. Viral pink eye is quite common. Pink eye due to a virus is very contagious. All members of your household should wash their hands carefully, and other children should not touch your child’s eyes. Your child should have his/her own washcloth and towel. Whenever you touch his other eye, you must wash your hands. In general it is not necessary to keep a child out of school or daycare when they have pink eye unless they also have a fever.

How is it treated?
Treatment depends on the cause. Viral pink eye will go away by itself and requires no treatment. Bacterial pink eye sometimes will get better faster with an antibiotic ointment. If an antibiotic is given, do not get the medicine in the other eye if it is not infected. You should also throw away any unused medication. Allergic pink eye gets better with an antihistamine such as Benadryl and by removing the child from whatever is causing the allergic reaction. Here are some other treatment suggestions:
- Clean any pus or drainage with a warm, wet washcloth or cotton ball
- Change your pillowcase each night.
- Do not touch or rub your eyes.
- Do not use eye makeup. You should also not wear contact lenses until the irritation is gone.
- Do not drive or operate machinery if your vision (seeing) is blurred.
- Sunglasses may be helpful if light bothers your eyes.
- Do not swim until your eye infection is gone.

What to watch for:
See your doctor for the following:
- The eyelids get red or swollen
- Your child has trouble seeing or has blurry vision.
- Your child gets a fever or looks sicker.
- The infection is not better in three to five days.
- You have any other questions or concerns.