



BSA SAFETY MOMENT

CONJUNCTIVITIS/PINK EYE

SUMMARY

Conjunctivitis, or pink eye, is a common inflammation or infection of the lining of the eyelid and the white part of the eyeball. Conjunctivitis can occur in both adults and youth; it may be highly contagious and can be spread easily to others.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Conjunctivitis presents as a redness or pinkness in the appearance of the eyeball, often accompanied by watery or thick drainage. Most cases of conjunctivitis are due to viral or bacterial infections, allergens, or irritants. Bacterial or viral infections can be very contagious, so it is very important to use good handwashing techniques. All types of conjunctivitis typically go away by themselves, so generally the Scout or Scouter does not have to leave the campout or other event.

Symptoms of conjunctivitis may also include:

- Crusty drainage on eyelids or lashes.
- Itchy, irritated, or burning eye.
- Increased tears.
- Eye discharge that may be clear, yellow, white, or green.

Conjunctivitis is almost always painless and does not significantly diminish the vision. If there is a considerable change in vision, or if pain is involved, the infected person must receive advanced medical care. If the person infected is wearing contact lenses, they must be removed. If there is pain or blurred vision after removal, medical attention is needed promptly to rule out damage to the eye.

Most simple pink eye issues can be relieved with artificial tears, warm compresses, or gentle washing of the eyelid and eyelashes with a small amount of mild soap (like baby shampoo or camp suds) on a cloth to remove mucus or discharge. Be careful to use disposable gloves when treating the affected eyes to reduce the chance of spreading the infection.

Best Practices

- Use good handwashing techniques as a preventative to stop the spread of infection.
- Avoid rubbing the infected eye or touching your face.
- Persons infected with conjunctivitis should not handle or prepare food.
- Do not use communal food sources, e.g., a trail mix bag.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, sleeping bags, etc.

RESOURCES

- Mayo Clinic—Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis):
www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pink-eye/symptoms-causes/syc-20376355
- Emergency Care and Safety Institute (ECSI): Wilderness First Aid Emergency Care in Remote Locations, 5th ed., page 119