

Patient information – Accident and Emergency

Allergic conjunctivitis

What is conjunctivitis?

The surface membrane of your eye is known as the conjunctiva. It forms a thin transparent layer over the white of your eye and under your eyelids.

Conjunctivitis means inflammation of the conjunctiva. It has several causes:

- An allergy - allergic conjunctivitis.
- An infection (bacteria or viruses) -infective conjunctivitis.

What are the symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis?

Allergic conjunctivitis usually affects both eyes. Symptoms may include:

- Red, itchy, watery eyes
- Sore eyes
- Swollen eyelids
- Blurry vision (due to the excessive tears)

You may get hay fever symptoms such as sneezing or a runny nose. Like hay fever, this condition can continue for some time (months).

What causes it?

Allergic diseases happen when the immune system reacts to harmless substances like dust, grass or pollen. It is more common in those with a history of allergies or those who have a family history of allergies. Allergy tests are not helpful. The seasonal type of allergic conjunctivitis will vary with the time of year and weather conditions. Those with more general allergies (e.g. dust mites, animals) may have symptoms throughout the year.

What are the treatment options for allergic conjunctivitis?

- **Avoid rubbing your eyes** – it will make the symptoms worse.
- **Cold compress** – this may help reduce eyelid swelling.
- **Lubricant eye drops or ointment** – these may help reduce discomfort but will not stop the allergy process.
- **Anti-allergy eye drops** – see table below. Most anti-allergy drops are available over the counter at a chemist. Anti-allergy drops need to be used every day and may take up to two weeks to work. Some people need drops for only a few weeks in the summer, some throughout spring and summer, and others need them all year round.
- **Antihistamine tablets** – see table below. Provided you have no medical reason which prevents you from using antihistamine tablets, these can be taken every day. They are available over the counter at a chemist. Always read the patient information leaflet provided by the manufacturer before taking any medication. Speak to a pharmacist or GP for further advice if you are uncertain.
- **Steroid eye drops are used in severe cases** - If all the above treatments are being used and there are still symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis, ask your GP to request an appointment with your local ophthalmology service. Steroid eye drops require a prescription, if they are needed.

Advice for contact lens wearers

Contact lenses should not be worn until symptoms have settled.

When to seek advice

If you develop persistent blurred vision, noticeable eye pain, or sensitivity to light, you should contact Moorfields for advice or go to your local A&E or urgent eye care department.

Moorfields emergency care video consultation

Every day 9am-9pm: <https://www.moorfields.nhs.uk/emergency-care>

Emergency telephone switchboard:

020 7253 3411

This is a 24-hour service for eye emergencies only. You can also go to Moorfields A&E department in City Road (open 24/7 for emergency eye problems only) for a further examination.



Moorfields nurse-led helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345. Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm. Saturday, 9am-5pm.
Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324 or 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Opening hours: 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday, except bank holidays.

Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right. For more information about your rights and responsibilities, please visit the Moorfields website and search 'Referrals to treatment (RTT)'. To learn more about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

Administering eye drops

This video on the Moorfields YouTube channel demonstrates how to put in your eye drops:

<https://tinyurl.com/putting-in-drops>

You can also scan this QR code to watch the video:



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Eye drops used for allergic conjunctivitis

Eye drops				
Generic name	Brand name	Action	Classification	Dosage
Sodium cromoglicate 2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allercrom Murine Hayfever Relief Opticrom Hayfever Optrex Hayfever Relief 	Mast Cell Stabiliser	GSL	1 or 2 drops into each affected eye 4 times daily
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catacrom Opticrom Allergy Optrex Allergy Hayfever Relief 	Mast Cell Stabiliser	P	
Lodoxamide 0.1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alomide 	Mast Cell Stabiliser	POM	
Olopatadine 0.1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opatanol 	DUAL ACTION	POM	1 drop twice a day
Ketotifen 0.25mg/mL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zaditen Ketofall 	Antihistamine + Mast Cell Stabiliser		

Tablets (non-drowsy)				
Generic name	Brand name	Action	Classification	Dosage
Fexofenadine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alleuvia 120mg Treathay 120mg 	Antihistamine	GSL	Adult or >12 years: 120mg once daily
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almerg 180mg 	Antihistamine	P	Adult or >12 years: 180mg once daily
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telfast 30 / 120 / 180 mg 	Antihistamine	POM	Adult or >12 years: 120 – 180mg once daily Child 6 -11: 30 mg twice daily
Cetirizine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allacan 10mg Benadryl Allergy One a day 10mg Piriteze Allergy 10mg Zirtek Allergy Relief 10mg 	Antihistamine	GSL	Adult or >12 years: 10mg once daily. Child 6-12: 5mg twice daily (half tablet)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zirtek Allergy 10mg 		P	

GSL: General Sale List Medicine – can be bought from a pharmacy or supermarket or other shop without a pharmacist present

P: Pharmacy Medicine – can only be bought from a retail pharmacy/chemist

POM: Prescription Only Medicine – can only be supplied against a valid prescription from a doctor or authorised health professional