

FACT SHEET

PINK EYE

(Bacterial/viral/allergic conjunctivitis)

<i>What is Pink Eye?</i>	Pink eye is a general term for an irritation or infection of the membranes that line the eye and eyelid. There are many causes including bacteria, viruses, or allergic reactions.
<i>How is it spread?</i>	Infectious pink eye is spread through direct contact with discharge from the eyes and nose, and from contaminated fingers, clothing, or other articles.
<i>What is the incubation period?</i>	It takes about 1-3 days after contact for symptoms to appear.
<i>What are the early signs?</i>	Irritation that causes redness and swelling of the eyelids and/or skin surrounding the eyes; sensitivity to light, eye pain; and a white or yellow discharge from the eye may be present.
<i>What about contacts?</i>	Children who have come into contact with an infected person should be observed, and excluded from school only if signs of pink eye occur.
<i>How long is the person contagious?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pink eye is contagious during the period of active infection. No longer contagious after 24 hours of proper treatment. • Pink eye caused by an allergic reaction is <i>not</i> contagious and, if the child feels well, he/she need not be excluded from school.
<i>When is it OK to return to school/childcare?</i>	For bacterial pink eye, 24 hours after proper treatment. No exclusion necessary for viral or allergic pink eye.
<i>What else should I know?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good handwashing decreases the spread of disease. Children should be taught to practice good handwashing and other hygiene measures. • Encourage children to keep their fingers away from their eyes, as infectious discharges on fingers can spread the infection from one eye to the other, and to other people.

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact a Kalamazoo County nurse at 373-5264 or 373-5267.