

Eye Irritation

Definition

- Eye irritation from getting an irritating substance in the eye
- The main symptom is a pink or red eye

Health Information

Symptoms

- The eye looks irritated
- Red or pink color of the white of the eye
- May have increased tears (a watery eye)
- Eyelid may be puffy (mildly swollen)
- No pus or yellow discharge
- No foreign body (FB) or hard substance in the eye

Cause

- The most common irritant is getting soap in the eye. Symptoms clear quickly.
- Irritants are often transferred by touching or itching the eye with dirty fingers. Fingers always have eye irritants on them after touching pets or plants. Some foods can be very irritating if they get in the eyes. Spicy foods or cinnamon are common examples. Sunscreens and insect repellents need to be kept out of the eyes.
- Chlorine in pool water causes brief irritation.
- Smoke or smog can be eye irritants until you leave that zone.
- **Pinkeye.** When the white of the eye becomes pink or red, it's called pinkeye. Conjunctivitis is the medical name for pinkeye. The conjunctiva is the membrane that covers the white part of the eye. It becomes pink when it is infected or irritated. Pinkeye (conjunctivitis) has many causes.

Care Advice

1. **Overview:**
 - Most eye irritants cause redness of the eyes.
 - Most are harmless and the redness will go away on its own.
 - Here is some care advice that should help.
2. **Face Cleansing:**
 - Wash the face with mild soap and water.
 - Wash off the eyelids with water.
 - This will remove any irritants still on the face.
3. **Eye Wash:**
 - Rinse the eye with warm water for 5 minutes.
4. **Eye Drops - Artificial Tears:**
 - Red eyes from irritants usually feel much better after being washed out. They don't need any eye drops.
 - If the eyes remain uncomfortable and bloodshot, you can use artificial tears. No prescription is needed.
 - Use 1 drop every hour as needed.

5. **Eye Drops: Vasoconstrictor Type**

- For irritants that you can't get away from, you can use vasoconstrictor eye drops. They are long-acting. No prescription is needed. Ask your pharmacist to suggest a brand. Age limit: 6 years and older.
- Dose: Use 1 drop every 8 to 12 hours as needed.
- Never use for more than 3 days. Reason: They can make the redness worse. This is called rebound redness.

6. **Prevention:**

- Try to avoid future contact with the irritant.

7. **What to Expect:**

- After the irritant is removed, the eyes usually return to normal color.
- This may take 1 to 2 hours.

8. **Return to School:**

- Children with pink eyes from an irritant do not need to miss any school.

Call Your Doctor If

- Pus in the eye occurs
- Redness lasts more than 24 hours
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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