

## Self Care Briefing for Clinicians: Conjunctivitis

### Summary

Conjunctivitis is usually self-limiting and will resolve within a week. Treatment is therefore not usually needed.

If treatment is needed, this should be selected in line with the cause of the infection:

- In severe bacterial cases, antibiotic eye drops and ointments can be used to clear the infection.
- Irritant conjunctivitis will clear up as soon as the irritant causing it is removed.
- Allergic conjunctivitis can usually be treated with anti-allergy medications such as topical mast cell stabilizers (systemic antihistamines are not recommended for patients who do not have concurrent rhinitis or sinusitis). The substance that caused the allergy should be avoided.

### Recommendations for clinicians

- Provide the patient with a 'non-prescription' sheet or a patient information leaflet to promote education about minor conditions suitable for self care when appropriate.
- Advise patients of safe and effective self-care measures:
  - Bathing/cleaning the eyelids with cotton wool soaked in sterile saline or boiled and cooled water to remove any discharge.
  - Gently applying cool compresses to the eye area.
- Advise patients to seek medical attention and consider treatment with a prescription in the following circumstances:
  - When they have any of the following symptoms: pain in the eyes, sensitivity to light, changes in vision and intense redness in one or both eyes.
  - Symptoms have not cleared up after 2 weeks.
- Same day appointments are required for babies under 28 days old with red eyes.

### Examples of over-the-counter products available to buy

Please advise patients that suggested prices are, a guide, correct at the time of writing and are subject to change.

- Chloramphenicol (0.5% eye drops): (£6.00 for 10ml) Not licensed for children under 2 years old.
- Chloramphenicol (1% eye ointment): (£5.00 for 4g) Not licensed for children under 2 years old.
- Sodium Cromoglicate (2% eye drops): (£5.00-£6.00 for 10ml).

## Further information

- [Selfcare forum](#)
- [NHS.uk](#)
- [Patient UK](#)

## Document History

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