

ALLERGIC EYE

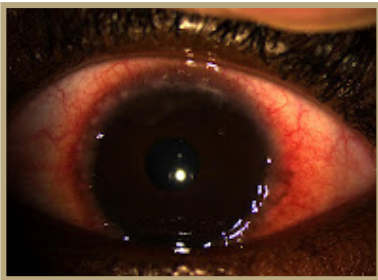
What is allergic conjunctivitis?

Allergic conjunctivitis occurs when the eye reacts to an irritant or allergen. The transparent membrane that covers the white of the eye and inside of the eyelid (the conjunctiva) becomes red and swollen.

Symptoms of itching, tearing and burning result. It is often associated with hayfever and a runny nose. It may be a temporary, seasonal phenomenon, or chronic,

in which case symptoms may persist throughout the year. Allergic conjunctivitis affects both eyes. It is not infectious.

Eyes can react to a number of different allergens. Common triggers are dust, pollen, animal dander, perfumes, cosmetics, preservatives in eyedrops and smoke.



How is it diagnosed?

The ophthalmologist will use a slit lamp microscope to examine your eye and look for signs of eye allergies. If the conjunctivitis is very severe or if the diagnosis is uncertain, the doctor may do additional tests.

How is it treated?

Avoid allergens

It is important to avoid exposure to allergens.

- **Pollen:** If you are allergic to pollens, avoid going out when pollen counts are highest, generally mid-morning and early evening. Try and wear eye protection and keep out of the wind. Air-conditioning filters should be kept clean.
- **Mould:** If you are allergic to mould, try to improve ventilation in damp parts of the house. Dehumidifiers may be helpful.
- **Dust:** If house dust is problematic, consider specially designed bedcovers and clean the house using a damp cloth rather than sweeping and stirring up the dust.
- **Pets:** Avoid contact with pets if you are allergic to them. Remember to wash your hands after contact. Try to avoid rubbing your eyes.

Artificial tears

Artificial tear drops can provide temporary relief. They are available without a prescription and can be used as often as you need them.

Decongestants (with or without antihistamines)

Decongestants may reduce redness. They are available without prescription and are sometimes in combination with antihistamines to relieve itching. These types of eyedrops should not be used for more than a few days.

Oral antihistamines

Oral antihistamines may be helpful. However, they may aggravate dryness of the eyes and worsen symptoms.

Antihistamine/mast-cell stabilisers

Many eyedrops have both antihistamine and mast cell stabilising activity. They may give relief from itching and redness and help prevent symptoms.

Corticosteroids

Corticosteroid eyedrops may be used in severe cases, but are only available on prescription. Careful monitoring of treatment by an ophthalmologist is mandatory, as corticosteroid eyedrops may cause significant harm to the eye and permanently affect eyesight.

Please note that these are general guidelines. If in doubt, consult your ophthalmologist.