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Dear Colleagues

## **RE: Conjunctivitis**

I have been asked to provide some advice notes for circulation to day-nurseries and schools regarding conjunctivitis. This is to specifically include recommendations concerning treatment and exclusion from the day nursery or school setting. I have therefore listed some facts for your information.

### **What is conjunctivitis?**

Conjunctivitis means inflammation of the eye.

### **How does conjunctivitis present?**

The eye appears red and may feel 'gritty', with a watery or yellow discharge.

### **What causes conjunctivitis?**

Conjunctivitis may be caused by a number of things for example bacteria, viruses, a tiny piece of debris in the eye such as grit or occasionally allergy to a particular substance.

### **How long does conjunctivitis last?**

The incubation period can be anything from 3 to 29 days depending on the bacteria or the virus, and the infection may last for 2-3 weeks. Many individuals have no more than redness of the eyes and a slight discharge for a few days.

### **What is the treatment?**

Sometimes it will not be clear whether the infection is bacterial or viral. The GP may take swabs.

- Bacterial Conjunctivitis may require antibiotic eye drops and/or ointment from the GP. Care should be taken to follow instructions on the pack or advice from the GP.
- Viral conjunctivitis is not helped by antibiotics and will clear up on its own, without treatment, probably taking between 5 and 14 days.

### **Exclusion from school or nursery?**

Exclusion of cases from school/nursery is not necessary. However, sometimes discomfort of Conjunctivitis can make the affected person feel generally unwell and "miserable". Young children especially may suffer more than adults, so should be kept off school until they feel better.

Exclusion may be necessary if an outbreak occurs. If outbreak is suspected further advice should be sought from your governing body and notified or cascaded as set down in your establishment's plan.

**How may the spread of conjunctivitis be prevented?**

- Good standards of hand washing and drying
- Personal hygienic care and appropriate treatment of the affected eye – including separate towels, face cloths and so on.
- Avoid sharing any clothing or equipment that may come into contact with the eye including toys

I hope that this helps with the care of and advice about individuals presenting at the day-nursery or school with conjunctivitis.

Janine Rayfield  
**Nurse Consultant Public Protection**  
**District Immunisation Coordinator**