

Sore/sticky eye

The two most common causes of sore/sticky eyes are **Conjunctivitis** and **Blepharitis**.

Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the thin skin that covers the white part of the eyes. One or both eyes become red or pink, they may be sticky, watery, feel 'gritty', sore or the eyelids may become swollen and stuck together after a sleep. It is very common.

Infective conjunctivitis is usually caused by the same viruses and bacteria that can cause a cough or a cold. In most patients this is not a serious condition and usually clears within a week or so without leaving any permanent damage to the eye. It is best to avoid wearing contact lenses during this time until symptoms have completely resolved.

In most cases infective conjunctivitis will settle without the need for antibiotic eye drops. Any irritating symptoms can usually be soothed with regular eye cleaning with cooled boiled water on cotton wool or lubricant eye drops e.g. Hypromellose eye drops which can be bought cheaply over the counter at the chemist without the need for a prescription. This condition like coughs and colds is contagious so please remember to wash hands regularly particularly after touching your eyes and don't share towels with family members until the infection has cleared.

If your symptoms don't settle after 7 days, you develop severe eye pain, light hurts your eyes, spots or blisters develop on the skin next to the eye, your vision becomes affected or if your newborn baby develops conjunctivitis then please book an appointment with the doctor as soon as possible.

The Health Protection Agency states that it is not necessary to exclude a child from school or childcare if they have infective conjunctivitis unless there is an outbreak of several cases.

Blepharitis is inflammation of the eyelids. This usually affects the edges of the eyelids which become sore or inflamed. It usually affects both eyes and they can become sticky with discharge or develop tiny flakes, scales or crust at the base of the eyelashes. This is not usually serious but can be an uncomfortable and recurrent problem. It is often caused by a combination of inflammation and infection. There is no one-off cure for this but regular daily 'eyelid hygiene' should keep symptoms to a minimum.

'Eyelid-hygiene' : the aim of this is to soothe the eyelids, unplug any blocked glands, clear out any stagnant oily secretions and clean the eyelids of debris. This is a daily routine consisting of warmth, massage and cleaning. **Warmth** – gently press on the eyelids with a flannel soaked in very warm water for 5-10mins. If the flannel cools keep re-warming it with warm water. **Massage** – massage the eyelids immediately after applying the warmth; use your index or middle finger and sweep the pad of the fingertip gently but firmly from the inner corner of the eye along the eyelid to the outer corner of the eye. Start with the upper eyelid and repeat with the lower eyelid. Repeat this 5 or 10 times over about 30 seconds. **Clean** – with cooled boiled water and a cotton wool bud try to clean off any crusts from the base of the eyelashes. Repeat this **warmth-massage-clean routine** twice a day until symptoms settle and once a day thereafter to prevent further flare-ups.

Most cases do not need antibiotic eyedrops or tablets but if your symptoms do not settle in a few days, become very severe, you develop eye pain rather than 'grittiness' or any loss of vision then make an appointment to see the doctor as soon as possible.