

WHAT'S UP DOC?

by *Katie Bell, RPA-C*

Q: What can be the cause of my child's red/irritated eyes this spring?

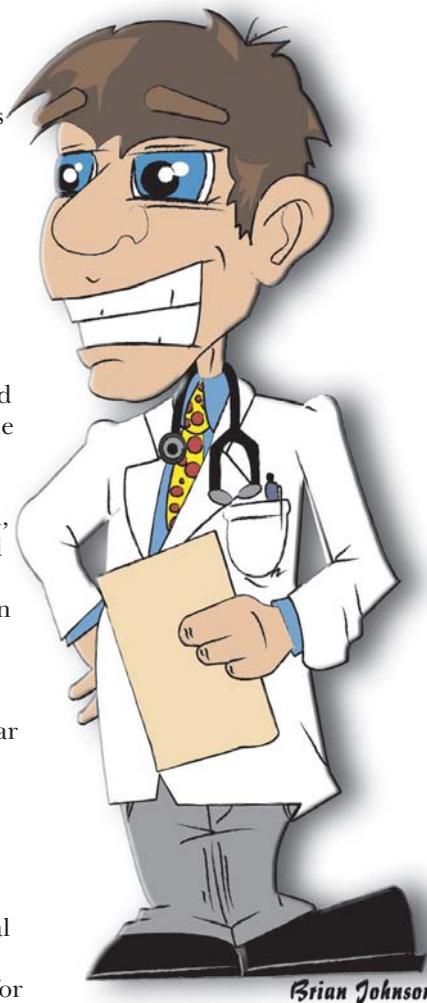
Many parents automatically assume their child has pink eye or bacterial conjunctivitis any time their child has red or irritated eyes. However, eyes which are red or have discharge from them may be due to conjunctivitis, allergies, or maybe even a sinus infection.

Q: How do I tell the difference between conjunctivitis, sinus infection, or allergies?

It can be difficult to distinguish infection from allergies in a child with red or irritated eyes. If a child has pink eye or conjunctivitis, the whites of one or both eyes will be significant red or pink. There is usually a yellow or green discharge coming from the eyes and are often "crusted over" first thing in the morning. The child will often complain their eyes hurt, burn, or itch. Usually with conjunctivitis, there are no other symptoms involved and the child doesn't typically have a fever. If a child's eyes are irritated and crusted over from sinusitis, they will typically also have a combination of other symptoms including but not limited to nasal congestion, headaches, fevers, or cough. With allergies this time of year a child can have red and itchy eyes and discharge which is usually clear. Other symptoms related to allergies usually include sneezing, coughing and clear runny nose but child usually doesn't have a fever.

Q: How do I treat my child's red eyes?

The treatment of your child's red eyes may either be antibiotic drops, oral antibiotics, oral antihistamines or allergy eye drops depending on the cause of the symptoms. It is best to have your child seen by their doctor for evaluation of their symptoms in order to know how to best treat the child.



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