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What is a bacterial eye infection?

When bacteria causes an eye infection, the eye drains a yellow discharge (pus). This condition is also called bacterial conjunctivitis, runny eyes, or mattery eyes.

Your child may have:

- yellow discharge in the eye
- eyelids stuck together with pus, especially after sleeping
- some redness in the white part of the eyes
- puffy eyelids.

Note: A small amount of cream-colored mucus in the inner corner of the eyes after sleeping is normal.

What is the cause?

Eye infections with pus are caused by bacteria and can be a complication of a cold. Pink eyes without a yellow discharge, however, are more common and are due to a virus.

How long does it last?

With proper treatment the yellow discharge should clear up in 72 hours. The red eyes (which are due to the cold) may continue for several more days.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Cleaning the eye**

Before putting in any medicines, remove all the pus from the eye with warm water and wet cotton balls. Unless this is done, the medicine will not have a chance to work.

- **Antibiotic eyedrops or ointments**

This infection must be treated with an antibiotic eye medicine. Your child's eye medicine is _____ . Put in _____ , _____ times a day.

Putting eyedrops or ointment in the eyes of young children can be a real battle. The easiest way is to put the eyedrops over the inner corner of the eye while he is lying down. When your child opens his eye and blinks, the eyedrops will flow in.

Ointment: ointment needs to be used just 4 times a day because it can remain in the eyes longer than eyedrops. Separate the eyelids and put in a ribbon of ointment along the lower eyelid from one corner of the eye to the other.

Contact lenses

Children with contact lenses need to switch to glasses temporarily. This will prevent damage to the cornea.

- **Contagiousness**

The pus from the eyes can cause eye infections in other people if they get some of it on their eyes. Therefore, it is very important for the sick child to have his own washcloth and towel. Your child's hands should be washed often to prevent spreading the infection. After using eyedrops for 24 hours, and if the pus is minimal, children can return to day care or school.

When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- The outer eyelids become very red or swollen.
- The eye becomes painful.
- The vision becomes blurred.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

Call within 24 hours if:

- The infection isn't cleared up after 3 days of treatment.
- Your child develops an earache.
- You have other concerns or questions.