



RED EYE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



WHAT IS RED EYE?

Red eye is an inflammation of the layer covering the white of eye and lining the eye lids. This inflammation makes blood vessels more visible and gives the eye a pink or reddish colour.¹

Most cases of red eye are caused by VIRUSES (in this case, red eye can be very contagious (can be spread to other persons)) **and do not require antibiotics.**

Red eye can also be caused by:

- Bacteria – in this case, red eye can be contagious.
- Allergens, like pollen – in this case, red eye is not contagious.
- Irritants, like smoke or dust – in this case, red eye is not contagious.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF RED EYE CAUSED BY VIRUSES?



- (1) Redness of the eye
- (2) Swelling of the eye lids
- (3) Watery discharge
- (4) The gritty feeling like something foreign is in the eye
- (5) Itching, burning or irritation of the eyes
- (6) Discomfort in the eye
- (7) Sensitivity to light



HOW CAN IT BE SPREAD TO OTHER PERSONS?



Red eye can be spread by:

- direct contact (**usually by your hands**), such as touching commonly used surfaces such as door knobs, keyboards or phones, and then rubbing your eyes.
- sharing personal items such as towels, medications, or make-up with persons that have red eye.



WHO CAN GET RED EYE CAUSED BY VIRUSES?

Anyone can get red eye, including babies.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE RED EYES?

There is no specific treatment for red eye caused by viruses.

- Generally, redness of eyes lasts 3-5 days and it goes away on its own.
- Some people have some relief from “artificial tears”. However, if you use them, “drop” them from a distance and do not keep your eye open with your other hand.
- Do not use antibiotic or steroid eye drops, unless prescribed by a physician.

Visit your doctor or health center if you have red eye with any of the following:



- (1) Pain in the eye
- (2) Blurring or loss of vision
- (3) Symptoms that get worse or do not improve
- (4) Pre-existing eye conditions



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID GETTING RED EYE?



- (1) Wash hands often with soap and water.
- (2) If soap & water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers (containing at least 70% alcohol) can also be used.
- (3) Do not share personal items like towels, wash rags, pillows, make-up, or eye glasses with others.
- (4) Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.

¹ “Help protect yourself from getting and spreading Pink Eye (conjunctivitis)”, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 20, 2016
<https://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/infographics/protect-yourself.html>