

# Outbreak of Pink Eye in Pune: What is Better; Precautions or Treatment?

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Sir,

Outbreak of any infection in community directly affects the public health. Currently, there was a sudden outbreak of viral conjunctivitis in Pune. Pink eye is viral conjunctivitis which is highly contagious. Conjunctivitis epidemics are common worldwide affecting all age group and socio-economic strata, but this outbreak in Pune is specifically drawing the attention due to the age group involving the school going children. More than 8000 children were affected and around 1100 cases were identified.<sup>1</sup>

Pink eye can be transmitted by a variety of routes, including inhalation, ingestion, direct inoculation, skin penetration, and others. On the transmission route's foundation, three categories are described: touch, droplet, and airborne. Their precautions are likewise classified in this category.<sup>2</sup>

A sudden epidemic of conjunctivitis was observed in school-going youngsters who were in close touch with many people. Because of the large number of students and the lack of social distance between them, schools are a key source of virus transmission

in children. Due to low immunity at this age, children are susceptible to the infection and in turn spread the infection to the family members and others who do not belong to or are connected to the infection source.<sup>3</sup>

Parents are concerned about whether they must put their child's health or education at risk. We want to contribute to this rapid epidemic in order to help parents and the community recover from the dread of viral conjunctivitis.

Majority of cases are self-limiting and do not require treatment; nevertheless, due to the high potential transmission channel, it spreads and infects a large number of people in a short period of time.<sup>4</sup> Many people avoid seeing professionals and instead try to treat the disease themselves, using oral and topical antibiotics as well as steroids.<sup>[4]</sup> The causative agent of conjunctivitis can be viral, bacterial, fungal, and allergic causes. Antibiotics can only treat bacterial infections; they cannot treat viral or fungal infections. This self-medication just contributes to the development of antibiotic resistance rather than curing

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the disease.<sup>5</sup> Unnecessary treatment and self-medication can increase the risk of spreading infection to other eye and may complicate the clinical presentation by causing allergy or toxicity and hence delayed recovery. Increased resistance in community is also of concern with frequent use of antibiotics.<sup>6</sup>

Only prompt attention and safeguards are required during viral conjunctivitis. None of the ophthalmologists recommend using antibiotics or steroids to treat viral conjunctivitis. This is a self-limiting condition that will resolve in a few days. To avoid further dissemination into society, patients must wait, isolate self and wear black goggles.<sup>7</sup> Hand hygiene is the key. Avoid touching, rubbing eyes, practice good hand hygiene with frequent washings to prevent the spread of infection.<sup>8</sup>

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has established guidelines for infection prevention and control, including do's and don'ts during conjunctivitis, which everyone should read and follow (Figure-1).<sup>9,10</sup>



**Figure 1: Pink eye- Prevention Tips**

To summarise, patients need to be aware and educated that pink eye is harmless and will resolve spontaneously. Instead of creating panic, we need to follow the guidelines issued by the MoHFW, avoid

self-medication, emphasise on hand washing, practice isolation in schools and home to prevent the epidemics.

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