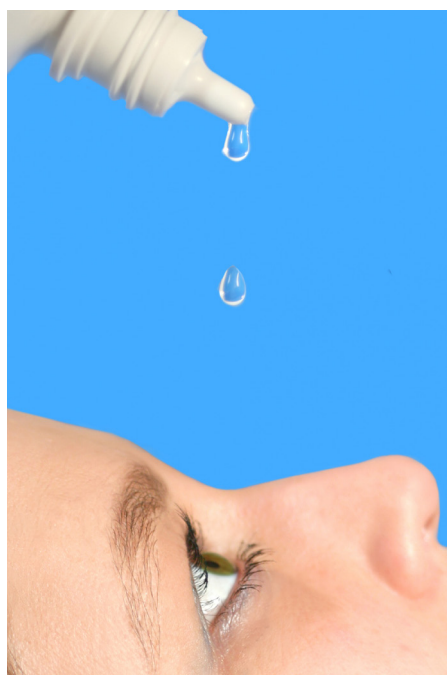


This article has been reviewed by Thanai Pongdee, MD, FAAAAI

Eye Allergy: Causes and Treatment

Eye allergies can cause inflammation of the conjunctiva - the mucous membrane covering the white of the eyes and the inner side of the eyelids. If something irritates this clear membrane, your eyes may water, itch, hurt, or become red or swollen. In these instances, the condition is called either allergic conjunctivitis or ocular allergy. It can occur alone, or it may be associated with nasal allergy symptoms. Unlike pink eye, this condition is not contagious.



If you have an allergy, your immune system identifies something as an invader or allergen. This reaction usually causes symptoms in the nose, lungs, throat, sinuses, intestinal tract or the eyes. The most common allergen is pollen, which is seasonal. Some people are susceptible to allergies at any time of year.

Most people suffering from eye

allergies have problems in both eyes. Symptoms may appear quickly, soon after the eyes have come into contact with the allergen. The most common symptom occurs when the eyes become irritated, the small blood vessels widen and the eyes become pink or red. Some people experience pain in one or both eyes. Other symptoms include swollen eyelids, a burning sensation, and sore or tender eyes.

There are many different treatment options, depending on the severity of the symptoms. As with any allergy, the first approach to managing eye allergies should be avoiding the allergens that trigger your symptoms. However, avoiding airborne allergens isn't always possible. That is when medications may be helpful.

Over-the-counter eye drops and oral medications are commonly used for short-term relief of some eye allergy symptoms. However, they may not relieve all symptoms, and prolonged use of some eye drops may actually make your symptoms worse.

Prescription eye drops and oral medications can also treat eye allergies. Prescription eye drops provide both short- and long-term targeted relief and can be used with an oral antihistamine for nasal allergy symptoms. Any medication placed in the eye should be kept in the refrigerator.

DID YOU KNOW?

- About 50% of conjunctivitis cases seen by primary care physicians are actually allergic in nature.
- Eye allergies may be more common than nasal allergies in some areas, especially in the southern United States.
- Eye allergies are annoying and uncomfortable, but they usually do not harm your eyes.

To the Point

Eye allergies are caused by seasonal or year-long allergies and can be treated with eye drops or oral medications.

An allergist/immunologist is the best-qualified medical expert to diagnose and treat allergies. To find an allergist/immunologist near you, visit the Physician Referral Directory at www.aaaai.org.

For more information on allergies, please visit the Patients & Consumers Center of the AAAAI Web site, www.aaaai.org.



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