

Common Eye Symptoms Could be an Allergy

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



Eye allergies occur when the conjunctiva becomes inflamed. This is the mucous membrane covering the white of the eye and the inner side of the eyelid.

Physicians use the terms “ocular allergy” or “allergic conjunctivitis” to describe this allergic reaction.

Like all allergies, allergic conjunctivitis starts when the immune system identifies an otherwise harmless substance as an allergen. When the immune system senses this allergen, it overreacts. Chemicals are produced which cause an allergic reaction. In this case, allergic reactions include eyes that water, itch, hurt or become red or swollen.

Typical allergens affecting the eyes include pollen and mold spores, animal dander and dust mites. So if you have been diagnosed with any of these allergies, then symptoms may develop in your eyes.

Most people suffering from eye allergies have problems in both eyes. Symptoms usually appear quickly, soon after the eyes come in contact with the allergen.

The most common symptom occurs when 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.

The first approach to managing your eye allergy symptoms is to avoid the allergens that trigger your symptoms. However, this isn't always possible. That is when medications might be helpful.

Over-the-counter eye drops or oral antihistamines are commonly used for short-term relief. If these are not effective, your allergist may prescribe long-term, targeted medications. Also, immunotherapy (allergy shots) is a proven treatment approach to managing many allergies, including ocular.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Unlike the condition pink eye, symptoms caused by an eye allergy are not contagious.
- If your symptoms are related to an eye allergy, chances are you will have problems in both eyes.
- 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 may be treated with eye drops, oral medications, or allergy shots.

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