

ALLERGIC CONJUNCTIVITIS

Allergic conjunctivitis is characterised by red, swollen, itchy eyes. A large number of agents (allergens) may be responsible: eg. pollen, dust mites, pets.

Vernal conjunctivitis is a specific type often occurring in childhood & capable of causing loss of vision from corneal scarring.

TREATMENT GUIDELINES:

1. **DO NOT RUB THE EYES:** this will cause more itching.
2. Keep the hands away from the eyes as they carry allergens into the eyes.
3. Avoid allergens:
 - Keep doors & windows closed at home & in the car.
 - Use air conditioners, as they filter the air.
 - When you come home, wash hands & hair to remove outside allergens & change into "indoor" clothes..
 - Keep animals out of bedrooms.
 - Wash pillows, sheets & blankets.
 - Vacuum the floor & carpets. Consider spraying to kill dust mites.
Consider polished floorboards instead of carpets.
4. A **COLD COMPRESS** may greatly relieve itching. **COOLING EYE DROPS** (by keeping them in the refrigerator) also eases symptoms.
5. Simple **LUBRICATING DROPS** can be used in mild cases: **MINIMS OF CLERZ, CELLUFRESH POLYTEARS FREE, THERA-TEARS** or **BION** are good, as they do not contain any preservatives.
6. **ANTIHISTAMINE DROPS** may work in mild cases, particularly for redness, but should not be used more than 2-3 times daily, eg **NAPHCON-A, ANTISTINE-PRIVINE**. LIVOSTIN is a new agent with no serious side effects.
7. **PREVENTATIVE DROPS:** There are some drops (Acular, Lomide, Opticrom, Vistacrom,) which can prevent itching if used 4 times every day. **LOMIDE** can be bought over the counter & should be used 3 to 4 times daily to prevent acute exacerbations.
8. **PATANOL OR ZADITEN:** 1 or 2 drops twice daily may be very effective in treating acute allergies. No side-effects. Expensive. Need prescription.
9. **CORTISONE EYE DROPS** (eg **FLUCON, FML, FLAREX, MAXIDEX**) are very effective in controlling severe allergy. In severe cases, they may be used 2 to 4 hourly for brief periods. The ideal is to control the allergy with the minimal use of cortisone. If used for long periods they can cause cataracts & glaucoma. Be wary of conditions where cortisone is contra-indicated, eg bacterial conjunctivitis or cold sore infections.
10. **ANTIHISTAMINE TABLETS** may help in some cases. The newer, but more expensive agents such as **ZYRTEC** or **TELDANE**, usually do not cause sedation.