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Opinion Article

Clinical Features and Management Strategies in Conjunctivitis

Sophia Reynolds*

Department of Ophthalmology, Brighton University, Brighton, United Kingdom

DESCRIPTION

Conjunctivitis refers to inflammation of the conjunctiva, the thin membrane covering the eye and lining the eyelids. This condition is commonly seen in outpatient settings and can present in a variety of forms depending on the cause. Understanding the clinical features and appropriate management is essential for effective care and minimizing complications. The onset of conjunctivitis can be rapid or gradual. Patients frequently report eye redness, irritation, tearing and a sensation of grittiness. The type of discharge offers clues to the cause; watery discharge is more typical of viral or allergic origins, while thick, yellow or green discharge suggests bacterial involvement. Associated symptoms such as itching, swelling or sensitivity to light provide additional guidance in differentiating causes. Viral conjunctivitis is prevalent during outbreaks of upper respiratory infections and can spread easily between individuals. It may be associated with other symptoms such as nasal congestion, sore throat and mild fever. Although self-limiting, maintaining hygiene and limiting eye contact with others reduces the risk of transmission.

Bacterial conjunctivitis frequently affects one eye initially but can quickly involve both. Eyelid crusting, morning stickiness and irritation are common. Topical antibiotics are often prescribed to accelerate recovery and prevent complications. Patients are advised to avoid contact lenses during the acute phase to prevent further irritation. Allergic conjunctivitis is triggered by exposure to allergens. Patients commonly report intense itching, redness and swelling, often affecting both eyes. Seasonal peaks are observed in response to pollen or other environmental triggers. Management includes antihistamine or anti-inflammatory eye drops and avoidance of known allergens. Cold compresses may also relieve discomfort. Irritant-induced conjunctivitis results from exposure to smoke, dust or chemicals. Symptoms usually begin shortly after contact and include redness, stinging and

tearing. Removal from the source of irritation is the primary management step. Protective eyewear and careful handling of chemical substances help prevent recurrence.

Diagnosis relies heavily on a detailed history and careful observation. Clinicians assess the pattern, severity and type of discharge, as well as any associated systemic symptoms. Slit-lamp examination aids in identifying subtle changes and detecting corneal involvement or swelling of adjacent tissues. Cultures or laboratory tests may be indicated in cases that are persistent or severe. Management strategies are based on etiology. Viral and allergic forms are treated symptomatically with lubricating drops, cold compresses and anti-inflammatory medications when needed. Bacterial cases typically require antibiotic therapy, either as drops or ointments. Patient education regarding hygiene, handwashing and avoiding eye contact with others is vital to prevent spread. The duration of conjunctivitis varies. Viral and allergic types often improve within a week or two, while bacterial forms may respond within a few days of starting antibiotics. Follow-up ensures resolution and detects potential complications, such as persistent redness, irritation or corneal involvement.

CONCLUSION

Preventive measures are an integral part of care. Hand hygiene, avoiding touching or rubbing the eyes and not sharing personal items reduce the likelihood of infectious conjunctivitis. Protective measures during exposure to chemical substances or environmental allergens minimize risk for irritant or allergic types. Conjunctivitis is a common condition that can impact comfort and daily activities. Accurate identification of the cause, appropriate treatment and preventive guidance ensure effective symptom relief and reduce recurrence. Clinicians play an essential role in patient education, monitoring and guidance for long-term eye health.

Correspondence to: Sophia Reynolds, Department of Ophthalmology, Brighton University, Brighton, United Kingdom; Email: sophia.reynolds@brightonuni.uk

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