A Note About Seasonal Conjunctivitis:

This form of pink eye involves both eyes at the same time. The discharge is water or teary, the eyes itch intensely, and it is usually accompanied by other allergy symptoms such as sneezing. Treatment includes use of decongestants, antihistamines, eye drops and removal of the allergy-producing agent. This form of pink eye cannot be spread to others.

Special Instructions:

Visit Student Health’s Web site at:
http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth

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What is it?

"Pink eye" (conjunctivitis) is an inflammation and redness of the conjunctiva (the layer of blood vessels covering the white part of the eye). It can appear suddenly or overnight. Pink eye is usually caused by viral infections. It can also be related to allergies or environmental irritants (such as smoke). Rarely can it be caused by a bacterial infection.

How do you get it?

Pink eye is commonly acquired through contact with contaminated objects (i.e. pillow cases, towels, books, others' make-up). These objects become contaminated through direct contact with infected eye discharge or from hands that were not properly washed after touching an infected eye.

What are the symptoms?

• Red eye(s)
• Clear or cloudy eye discharge
• Light sensitivity
• Matting of the eyelashes, especially in the morning
• Itching of the eyes

When is medical care needed?

If you have symptoms of pink eye, you should seek medical attention. Other problems, like abrasions or foreign bodies in the eye, can produce similar symptoms and need to be ruled out.

What can you do?

If you have a viral form of pink eye – which is very contagious – you need to take measures to decrease the chance of spreading it to others or reinfecting your own eyes:

• Change pillow cases, towels and wash clothes daily.
• Discontinue the use of contact lenses until your health care provider advises you that it is safe to resume their use.
• Discontinue eye makeup until your eyes are no longer infected (usually 5 days after treatment has begun).
• Keep your hands off your eyes. If you need to touch them, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water afterwards.
• Use medications as directed for the time period indicated. Your symptoms may be gone before the infection has been eliminated.
• Avoid touching the tip of any medication container (i.e. ointment or drops) on the eye.
• Apply warm compresses 4 times a day for 10 minutes on each eye to help reduce eye irritation. Use paper towels as compresses and discard them immediately to prevent spreading the infection.

Consult health care personnel:

• if there is no improvement in 4-5 days of beginning treatment.
• if vision decreases.
• if sharp eye pain occurs.
• if sensitivity to light persists.
• anytime you are unsure of what to do.