



Self-Care – Simple Allergic Conjunctivitis

Taking care of your “SELF” – Supporting Everyone to Live Freely

This is a self-care guide designed for those working in care homes, residential homes and assisted living.

The information provided in this guide does not replace person centred clinical advice.

The following information should be used as a guide when advising or purchasing self-care treatments for people residing in a care home, residential home or assisted living. Self-care medication and medical products are not always the most appropriate choice for treating minor ailments. Sometimes starting with a lifestyle change or trying natural remedies can be more effective.

Should you have any concern at any time around self-care items being purchased on behalf of the resident or being brought in by relatives for the resident’s use, please discuss with your community pharmacist or GP practice.




What is simple allergic conjunctivitis?

Simple allergic conjunctivitis (SAC) is an eye condition caused by an allergy to pollen or an allergen. It usually occurs when the eye is irritated causing a swelling of the thin, clear layer that covers the white of the eye and lines the eyelid (the conjunctiva). It can also be referred to as “red or pink eye”. Using self-care treatments this condition will usually get better after a few weeks.

Symptoms of simple allergic conjunctivitis:

If the resident has allergic conjunctivitis, it will affect both of their eyes which will feel very itchy. The resident may also experience hay fever or asthma symptoms too as well as the following:

- Red eye(s)
- Watery discharge
- Sticky eye(s)
- Bloodshot eye(s)

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- Burning sensation in eye(s)
 - Gritty eye(s)
 - Itchy eye(s)

There are different types of conjunctivitis and other, more serious conditions that can present as conjunctivitis.

If you have concerns or suspect that the condition is more serious than simple allergic conjunctivitis then seek advice from a local community pharmacist or the practice nurse.

Treating simple allergic conjunctivitis self-care advice:

- Boil some water and let it cool. Using a clean piece of cotton wool (using separate pieces for each eye) assist or support the resident to gently swipe the moist cotton wool over the eye lashes to clean off any crusts, making sure you use a clean piece for each swipe of the eye
- To help with the discomfort of conjunctivitis you can assist or support the resident to hold a cold flannel over their eyes for a few minutes to soothe the eyes and cool them down
- If the resident wears glasses then make sure you encourage or support with regular cleaning to remove any allergens that may be clung to them
- Encourage the patient to try and stay away from the source of the allergy
- On days when the pollen count is high, keep windows closed, and encourage the resident to wear sunglasses whilst they are outside
- Regularly wash the bedding to rid it of any allergens and to prevent the spread of infection

Ways to prevent conjunctivitis:

- Encourage regular hand washing and advise the resident not to touch the eye(s)
- Provide clean towels and pillow cases (more regularly than usual) advise the resident not to share them with others
- If the resident likes to wear make-up, advise to avoid while eye is irritated. Also advise not to share make-up with others
- If you are aware what is causing the allergic conjunctivitis then advise the resident to avoid anything they know their allergic to (wherever possible)

You should not usually need to see a GP for simple allergic conjunctivitis. If you suspect it may be another form of conjunctivitis you may want to seek advice from the community pharmacist.

The pharmacist will advise and suggest eye drops or antihistamines to help with symptoms.



When to contact the GP

- The resident complains of pain in their eyes
- The resident complains of sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- The resident complains of changes in their vision, like wavy lines or flashing
- The resident has intense redness in one eye or both eyes
- These can be signs of a more serious eye problem
- **If you have any concerns about the resident and their condition**

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References:

Bupa - <https://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/directory/c/conjunctivitis>

NHS Choices - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/conjunctivitis/>