EYE INFECTIONS (CONJUNCTIVITIS)

1. **Definition:** An eye infection (pinkeye) causes redness of the sclera (white part of the eyeball) plus a yellow discharge. Often the eyelids are stuck together with dried pus when the child awakens in the morning. Such an eye infection is caused by bacteria and will clear up in a few days with the following treatment.
2. **Cleaning the eye:** Before putting in any medicines, remove all dry and liquid pus from the eye with warm water and wet cotton balls. This should be done as often as pus is seen in the eye, sometimes every hour. Unless this is done, the medicine will not have a chance to work.
3. **Medicine:** Your doctor will also give you an eye medication. This needs to be put in several times a day during waking hours. Pull down the lower lid of the affected eye or eyes and place about ¼ inch of the medicine, or drops, in the lower lid. Continue the medication until the child has awakened for two mornings in a row without any pus in his/her eyes. Generally this is about five days. If stopped sooner, the infections will probably come back. In younger children, under two years of age, ear infections often accompany conjunctivitis and will require an office visit to determine the presence or absence of an ear infection and to treat the child appropriately.
4. **Contagiousness:** The pus from the eyes can cause eye infections in other people if they get some of it in their eyes. Therefore it is very important for the sick child to have his own washcloth or towel. He/she should be encouraged not to touch or rub his/her eyes. Everyone's hands should also be washed often to prevent spread of the infection.
5. **Call our office during regular hours if:**
    - **a.** The infection hasn't begun to clear by 72 hours.
    - **b.** Any fever develops.
    - **c.** The child has pain with the infection (not itching)
    - **d.** Any sores develop on the eyeball.
    - **e.** The vision changes.
    - **f.** Or, for any other symptoms that concerns you.
6. **Call our office urgently if:**
    - **a.** The child develops a fever over 104° F and/or redness spreads onto the skin surrounding the eyeball (onto the cheek and eyebrow).
7. One condition in newborns that can be confused with pink eye is a plugged tear duct in the eye. This generally starts in the first month of life and may last for a year. The sclera (white part of the eyeball) is not red, but there may be a lot of watery or mucousy drainage from the eye, usually only on one side. If this happens, you should massage along the side of the nose starting from the eye down with a warm washcloth. Call our office during regular office hours to let us know what is going on (non-urgently), and to talk with our triage nurse about the condition.