

# Eye discharge

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Eye discharge refers to a sticky or runny fluid coming from the eyes that is not tears. It is normal to wake up with some discharge in the corner of the eye, and this is not a concern.

Sometimes eye discharge is a sign of other conditions, such as conjunctivitis (see Conjunctivitis fact sheet) or blocked tear ducts. Blocked tear ducts in babies often improve without treatment by the age of 1 year.

Conjunctivitis can be caused by a virus or bacteria (called infectious conjunctivitis), a reaction to something in the eye, or an allergy. Infectious conjunctivitis can cause:

- watery or white discharge (viral conjunctivitis)
- yellow or green sticky discharge that can make it hard to open the eye (bacterial conjunctivitis).

## How it spreads

Eye discharge caused by bacteria or a virus can spread easily between people (see Conjunctivitis fact sheet). It spreads by direct contact with eye secretions, or by contact with towels, washcloths or tissues that have eye secretions on them.

Eye discharge caused by blocked tear ducts, allergic reactions or irritants in the eye is not infectious.

## Exclusion period

Exclude until discharge from the eyes has stopped (unless a doctor has diagnosed a non-infectious cause for the eye discharge).

## Actions for educators and other staff

Follow the exclusion period in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Treat any discharge from an eye as infectious – wash your hands thoroughly if they come in contact with eye discharge.

Ensure staff and children have good hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

## Actions for parents and carers

Check the cause of your child's eye discharge with a health professional, so that you can start any required treatment quickly.

If your child has an infectious eye discharge, keep them at home until the discharge has stopped.

## More information about eye discharge

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of eye discharge ([healthdirect.gov.au/eye-discharge](http://healthdirect.gov.au/eye-discharge)).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker ([healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker](http://healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker))
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.