

# Trachoma

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Trachoma is an eye infection caused by a bacteria called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Symptoms include red, sticky, itchy or painful eyes. Children may not show symptoms of trachoma, but repeated infections can cause blindness in adulthood.

Trachoma can be treated with a single dose of an antibiotic. If left untreated, it can cause the eyelid to turn inward. The person's eyelashes then rub on the surface of the eye, damaging it. In Australia, trachoma is more common in remote areas with limited access to water and washing facilities, which makes good hygiene more difficult.

## How it spreads

Trachoma spreads when people have contact with fluid from the eyes and nose of infected people. It can spread when people share face cloths or towels. Flies can also spread the bacteria between people.

## Exclusion period

Exclude until antibiotic treatment has started, and talk to your local public health unit for advice.

## Actions for educators and other staff

Contact your local public health unit for advice if you have a case of trachoma in your service.

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

Ensure staff and children have good hand hygiene and do not share towels or face cloths.

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

## Actions for parents and carers

If your child has trachoma, your child and everyone in the household will need to get antibiotics from your doctor.

Keep your child at home until they have started treatment. You can help prevent repeated trachoma infections by teaching your child to wash their hands and face well, and making sure family members do not share face cloths or towels.

## More information about trachoma

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

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.