

Self-Care Handout

Eye Symptoms

Eye symptoms may be caused by viral or bacterial infections, allergies, or by a foreign body in the eye.

Seek immediate care by a provider, urgent care or emergency department for these symptoms:

- Eye tenderness or pain
- Difficulty seeing clearly, blurred vision
- Difficulty keeping the eye open or sensitivity to light
- Severe headaches with nausea
- Recent trauma to the eye
- Symptoms worsen or fail to improve

Self-Care Measures

- Try not to touch or rub your eyes. Anytime your hands come into contact with your eyes, wash your hands to prevent spread to others.
- Alternate applications of moist heat and cold. A cold washcloth across the eyes will help soothe and decrease itching. A very warm washcloth across the eyes will stimulate blood flow to the eyes. Increased blood flow will bring more white blood cells to the eye to help decrease the irritation and fight any infection, if present. Use a clean washcloth or wet paper towel with each application.
- If your eyes feel itchy, use of antihistamines (Claritin, Zyrtec, Allegra) or antihistamine eye drops or allergy (Zaditor, Pataday, Patanol) may help decrease the itchy eye feeling. Use during daytime. All are offered in generic forms (Claritin/Loratadine, Zyrtec/Cetirizine, or Allegra/Fexofenadine). Follow package dosing instructions.
- Diphenhydramine (generic Benadryl) can be used, as needed, at night for eye itching. This drug may cause drowsiness, so use with caution especially while driving. Follow package dosing instructions.
- Ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory medication. If you are experiencing redness and/or discomfort in your eyes, Ibuprofen may help. Follow package dosing instructions.
- If you wear contacts, take them out and keep them out until your eyes are back to normal, or as instructed by your Health care provider. Discard “old” contacts and start with a new pair.
- Consider discarding eye make-up, especially eye liner and mascara, which may harbor the virus or bacteria and could potentially re-infect the eyes.
- Wear sunglasses to decrease exposure to light.
- Use a moist, warm washcloth to remove crusted discharge from your eyelashes, if needed

Please call to make an appointment at your on-campus Student Health Clinic or with your PCP or go to Urgent Care or the Emergency Department if your concerns do not improve with conservative self-care treatment or if you have worsening symptoms.

Please know your health problems and allergies. Information contained in this handout is for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for evaluation and treatment by a Healthcare professional. As new and updated information becomes available, the content may change. Please contact your Healthcare Provider or the on-campus Student Health Clinic with any questions.

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Developed 8/18

Reviewed 8/19; 8/21; 2/22; 1/23, 1/24, 1/25, 1/26

Revised 8/19; 2/22; 1/23, 1/24, 1/25, 1/26