GOVERNMENT OF GUAM
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIPATTAMENTON SALUT PUPBLEKO YAN SETBISION SUSIAT

EDDIE BAZA CALVO
GOVERNOR

RAY TENORIO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JAMES W. GILLAN
DIRECTOR

LEO G. CASIL
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

MAY 2 6 2016

Press Release No. 2016-045

Prevent the spread of Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

The Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) would like to remind everyone to perform simple hygiene steps outlined below to prevent the spread of conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye. Guam has had conjunctivitis outbreaks in the past, the most recent occurring in 2014, and Guam is at risk due to the ongoing outbreaks of conjunctivitis across the Pacific.

What causes conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis causes inflammation (swelling) of the conjunctiva—the thin layer that lines the inside of the eyelid and covers the white part of the eye. Conjunctivitis is often called "pink eye" or "red eye" because it can cause the white of the eye to take on a pink or red color.

The most common causes of conjunctivitis are viruses, bacteria, and allergens. Other causes include: chemicals, fungi, air pollution, and foreign objects, such as contact lenses.

What are the signs and symptoms of conjunctivitis?

- Pink or red color in the white of the eye(s)
- Swelling of the conjunctiva and/or eyelids
- Increased tearing
- Discharge of pus, especially yellow-green (more common in bacterial conjunctivitis)
- Itching, irritation, and/or burning
- Feeling like a foreign body is in the eye(s) or an urge to rub the eye(s)
- Crusting of eyelids or lashes sometimes occurs, especially in the morning
- Symptoms of a cold, flu, or other respiratory infection may also be present
- Sensitivity to bright light sometimes occurs
- Enlargement and/or tenderness, in some cases, of the lymph node in front of the ear

What can be done to prevent the spread of conjunctivitis?

You can prevent the spread of conjunctivitis by instituting the following measures:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water or an alcohol based hand rub, especially after handling contaminated items, such as linens and eyeglasses.
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.
- Wash any discharge from around the eyes several times a day. Wash hands first. Use a clean washcloth or fresh cotton ball/tissue to cleanse the eye area. Wash your hands with soap and warm water when done.
- Wash hands before and after applying eye drops or ointment.

- Do not use the same eye drop dispenser/bottle for infected and non-infected eyes (even for the same person).
- Wash linens in hot water and detergent.
- Avoid sharing articles like towels, blankets, and pillowcases.
- Clean eyeglasses.
- Do not share face make-up and make-up brushes, contact lenses and containers, or eyeglasses.
- Do not use swimming pools when infected.

If you are around someone with infectious conjunctivitis, you can reduce your risk of infection by following these steps:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water or an alcohol based hand rub.
- Wash your hands after contact with an infected person or items he or she uses.
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.
- Do not share items used by an infected person; for example, do not share pillows, washcloths, towels, eye drops, eye or face makeup, and eyeglasses.
- Clean and handle your contact lenses as instructed by your eye doctor.

In addition, if you have infectious conjunctivitis, there are steps you can take to avoid re-infection once the infection goes away:

- Throw away and replace any eye or face makeup you used while infected.
- Replace contact lens solutions that you used while your eyes were infected.
- Throw away disposable contact lenses and cases that were used while your eyes were infected.
- Clean extended wear lenses as directed.
- Clean eyeglasses and cases that were used while infected.

Contact your doctor if you notice any signs or symptoms you think might be pink eye.

REMEMBER, good personal hygiene — especially frequent hand washing and avoiding rubbing your eyes — are the most important steps you can take to minimize the spread of conjunctivitis.

For more information on conjunctivitis, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at http://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/about/prevention.html

JAMES W. GILLAN
Director