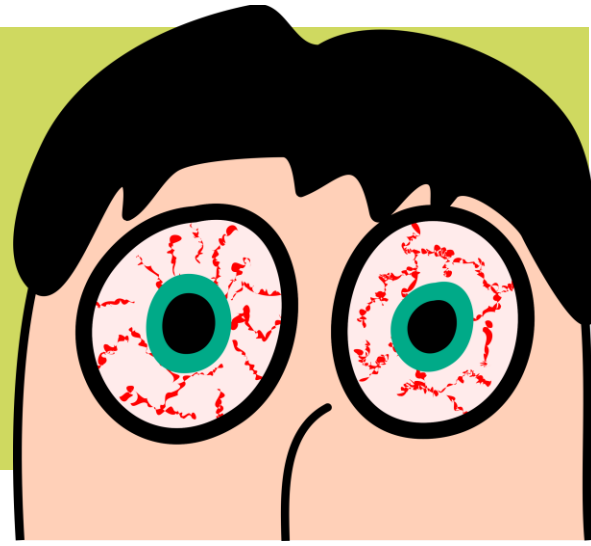


Hawk Health News

April, 2024



Health Protocol Review

Topic: Conjunctivitis... aka, Pink Eye!

Conjunctivitis, better known as pink eye, is back with a vengeance (especially in the lower grade buildings)! So, we thought it was a good time to review what it is and how we deal with it at school.

Pink eye can be caused by a virus, bacteria, or allergens that infect and inflame the transparent membrane that lines the eyelid and eyeball. This is called the conjunctiva. This inflammation is what causes the whites of the eyes to become red or pink and produces white, yellow, or green discharge from the eye. Most commonly we see viral pink eye but we also see bacterial a fair amount. Both viral and bacterial pink eye are contagious and can spread easily via contact with the drainage from the affected eye, or from droplets from coughing or sneezing the contingent into someone's eyes. Allergic pink eye is not contagious. The good news is pink eye is easily treated with or without medications and rarely causes lasting effects!

So, can students be at school if they have pink eye? The short answer is yes! We do not require a student with pink eye to stay home in most cases as it is often viral and not effectively treated with antibiotics. However, we do ask parents to use their best judgement and if your student is in pain or uncomfortable due to the infection we would ask that student to stay home until they feel good enough to be at school. We also ask parents to consider keeping their child home if they feel their child is not capable of keeping their hands away from their eyes as this could lead to rapid spreading of the infection.

Viral Vs. Bacterial:

| | <u>Bacterial Conjunctivitis</u> | <u>Viral Conjunctivitis</u> |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| <u>Distinctive symptoms</u> | Thick, pus-like discharge that sticks eyelids together, eyelid swelling, pain, vision problem | Thin, watery, clear discharge, itching and burning, light sensitivity, gritty feeling |
| <u>Duration</u> | 1-2 weeks (less with treatment) | 14-30 days |
| <u>Treatment</u> | Antibiotics but can heal without treatment. | Will heal on its own. Focus on easing symptoms. |
| <u>Contagiousness</u> | Highly contagious until symptoms resolve (even with antibiotic treatment). | Highly contagious for about 10-14 days |

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

6th graders that are scheduled for well-child visits over this school year and summer, don't forget to get your Tdap immunization which is needed prior to entering 7th grade!

Fun Health Tidbits!

Did you know that urinating in a pool is dangerous for your heart? As it turns out, urine and chlorine create dangerous chemicals when combined. One of the chemicals, cyanogen chloride, is classified as a chemical warfare agent and can damage your heart and lungs. A great thing to remember the next time you want to take dip in the pool!

NUTRITION AT SCHOOL

Food Allergies at School

Food allergies are a growing health concern that affects on average 1 in 13 children, or about 2 students per class. A food allergy occurs when the immune systems mistakenly responds to certain foods resulting in a severe, and sometimes life threatening, immune response. The most common food allergies in the US are: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy, peanuts and tree nuts. Symptoms and severity of allergic reactions to food can vary between individuals and can even be different for one person over time. Anaphylaxis is a sudden and severe allergic reaction that can result in death.

So, when considering how to manage these food allergies at school it is important to think about each individual student with a known allergy and their needs, as well as taking into consideration how we can put preventative measures in place to reduce accidental exposure and prevent anaphylaxis school wide.

The following is a list of safety measures we have put in place to help protect our students with food allergies:

- “Peanut-free classroom” policy – restricts any peanut/nut foods from entering the classrooms (Note: peanut/nut products can be consumed in the cafeterias but is not part of our hot lunch program). (See link below).
- Student’s with moderate to severe food allergies are encouraged to have a Section 504 plan that clearly outlines their individual needs and accommodations that help them feel safe and supported while at school.



- All students with a food allergy have an alert flag in their electronic file to alert staff and food service department of their allergy.
- Our food service program is wonderful about accommodating common food allergies as needed.
- Students with severe allergies that require an Epi-pen at school have an Anaphylaxis Action plan (see link below) filled out and signed by their doctor.
- Every building on campus has Epi-pens available for use to any student that may unexpectedly experience anaphylaxis from an unknown allergy. These are located in each office in a clearly marked box.

It is important to differentiate the difference between a food allergy and a food sensitivity/intolerance. While both are important with serious health implications, a food allergy has the potential to be a health emergency that can quickly turn deadly. This article is specific to food allergies only.

Link to Peanut/Nut free Campus Policy:

<https://www.hellgate.k12.mt.us/departments/health-services/peanutnut-free-campus-policy>

Link to Anaphylaxis Action Plan and other helpful links:

<https://www.hellgate.k12.mt.us/departments/health-services/life-threatening-allergies>