



Conjunctivitis: When the Eyes Have It, How Many Patients Turn to Urgent Care?

“Care must be taken to differentiate bacterial infections from viral diseases and allergic conditions.”¹ Things don’t get much plainer than that statement, quoted from an article published in *Review Of Ophthalmology* back in 2006. And yet, care is *not* always taken to differentiate bacterial infections of the eye from viral diseases and allergic conditions. That was made abundantly clear in this month’s cover article, Evaluation of Infectious Conjunctivitis by Clinical Evaluation and Novel Diagnostics (page 11), which revealed that 58% of patients with pink eye filled a prescription for antibiotics—even though the majority of acute conjunctivitis cases are found to be due to adenoviruses and not bacterial infections.²

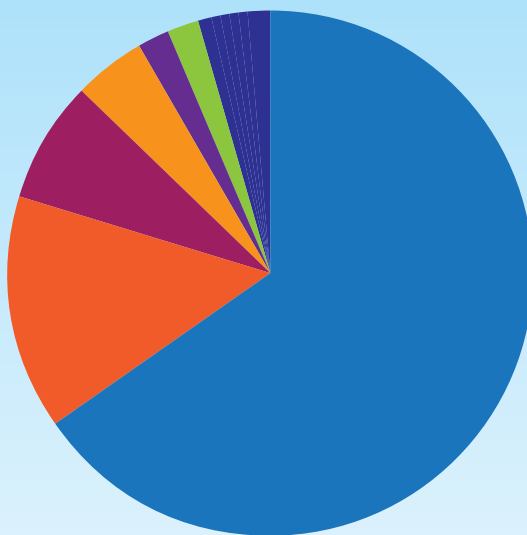
This is a very relevant point in urgent care. Perhaps surprisingly, urgent care and primary care providers evaluate up to 83% of conjunctivitis patients initially presenting to

a non-eyecare provider.² Looking at it from within the urgent care center, ophthalmologically oriented complaints are at the root of 3.41% of visits to urgent care centers.³ Various disorders of the conjunctiva, inflammation of the eyelids, superficial injury to the eye and adnexa, and “other” complaints (disorders of the iris and ciliary body, cataract, glaucoma, and blindness/low vision) account for 91% of total eye-related visits. To see how the data break down—and which disorders of the eye you’re most likely to encounter—see the graph below. ■

References

1. Abelson M, Shapiro A, Lapsa I. Meeting the challenge of conjunctivitis. *Rev Ophthalmol*. Available at: <https://www.reviewofophthalmology.com/article/meeting-the-challenge-of-conjunctivitis>. Accessed September 5, 2019.
2. Shekhawat NS, Shtein RM, Blachley TS, Stein JD. Antibiotic prescription fills for acute conjunctivitis among enrollees in a large United States managed care network. *Ophthalmology*. 2017;124(8):1099-1107.
3. Urgent care chart survey. *J Urgent Care Med*. Urgent care chart survey. 2018.

WHAT PROVIDERS SEE WHEN IT COMES TO THE EYE



Prevalence of Eye-Related Diagnoses (Percentage of Total Urgent Care Visits)

- Disorders of the conjunctiva: 2.23
- Inflammation of eyelids: 0.49
- Superficial injury of eye and adnexa: 0.26
- Other disorders: 0.15
- Foreign bodies: 0.07
- Visual disturbances: 0.06
- Contusion of the eye and adnexa; lacrimal disorders; other disorders of the eyelids; disorders of the orbit; keratitis; and "other": 0.15

Source: Urgent Care Chart Survey. *J Urgent Care Med*. Urgent care chart survey. 2018.