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Allergic Conjunctivitis

Your eye doctor has given you the following prescription: _____

Eye drops have been prescribed to alleviate the symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis. An allergen has irritated the thin clear mucous membrane that lines the inside of your eyelids and the white part of your eye, called the *conjunctiva*. Symptoms vary from person to person. More than 22 million people in the United States suffer from the most common eye allergy: allergic conjunctivitis.

What Is an Allergic Response?

An allergic response is an overreaction of the body's immune system to foreign substances known as allergens, which the body wrongly perceives as a potential threat. When the eye comes into contact with certain allergens, an allergic response can result. Plant pollens, animal dander, dust mites, mold spores, grass and ragweed, cosmetics and perfumes, skin medicines, and air pollution often cause allergies. Our eyes have millions of *mast cells* that release chemicals, causing the symptoms.

Common symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis include the following:

- Itchy eyes and eyelids
- Watery eyes
- Dilated vessels in the conjunctiva
- Burning sensation around the eyes
- Redness around the eyes
- Swollen eyelids
- Blurred vision
- Sensation of fullness in the eyes or eyelid
- Sensation of foreign body in the eye
- An urge to rub the eyes
- Lid twitches
- Dry eyes
- Long strings of mucus in the corner of the eye
- Floaters in the tears

The drops prescribed will alleviate the symptoms caused by the release of these chemicals and block the mast cells from releasing more.

Two types of allergic conjunctivitis exist, seasonal and perennial. The former is the more common of the two, occurring in the majority of people who have this condition. It is associated with seasonal allergies that commonly occur during the spring and summer months and is usually caused by exposure to airborne allergens, such as grass and plant pollens. Perennial allergic conjunctivitis persists throughout the year and is generally triggered by indoor allergens such as animal dander, dust mites, and mold spores.

Your doctor will evaluate the success of the eye drops and advise you regarding future use. If symptoms seem to worsen, call the office immediately.

