

# Common Causes of Red, Sore Eyes<sup>1</sup>

Eyes can become red and sore due to a number of reasons. The following will help you make the best assessment of the cause and make the most appropriate product recommendation:

- **'Environmental' or 'Minor' Irritant Conjunctivitis (often referred to as 'Bloodshot eyes')**

It is a common problem for eyes to appear red and feel sore and irritated. This can be due to our environment or our lifestyle activities which can dry our eyes and make them feel sore. Or because they have been mildly irritated by, for example, dusty atmospheres, wind, swimming, smoke, air pollutants, and close work such as reading and computer use. In these situations, the blood vessels on the white surface of the eyes can become enlarged making the eyes feel sore and look red.

- **Infective Conjunctivitis (referred to by some as 'Pink Eye')**

This is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the mucous membranes that line the inner surface of the eyelids. It can be caused by either a bacterial or a viral infection.

- **Allergic Conjunctivitis**

This is an inflammation of the conjunctiva due to an allergen which could be seasonal (e.g. hayfever) or perennial (house mites, animal dander, etc).

**Serious symptoms requiring immediate referral**

Customers with more serious eye symptoms such as severe eye pain or distorted vision (signs of glaucoma, iritis, keratitis, scleritis), a penetrating eye injury or if the eye has been irritated by harsh chemicals, should be immediately referred to a doctor.

**See symptom and recommendation flowchart for full details.**

## Symptom & Recommendation Flowchart<sup>1,2</sup>

Work through the following flowchart with your customer to determine the cause of their symptoms and appropriate product recommendation or if referral is required.

### Serious Symptoms

Does the consumer present with any of the following?

- Penetrating eye injury or embedded foreign body
- Harsh chemical irritants in eye such as acid, alkali, or cement
- Moderate to severe pain in the eye
- Continued redness in one eye
- Photophobia (unable to tolerate light)
- Blurred or distorted vision (other than a slight temporary blurriness)
- Pupil is an abnormal shape or uneven
- Systemically unwell (eg headache or vomiting)

No

Yes

Refer immediately to a doctor.

### Infection

Does the eye show any of the following?

- Sticky discharge
- Eyes stuck together in morning after waking
- If both eyes are affected, did it start in one eye first?
- Eyes slightly swollen

No

Yes

Infective conjunctivitis is usually self-limiting, clearing in 1-2 weeks without treatment. Recommend removing contact lenses and cleaning eyes with cotton wool soaked in water. Use clean wool for each eye. Eye drops (such as lubricating Murine dry & tired eyes) may ease soreness and stickiness in eyes. If customer prefers treatment, recommend an anti-infective eye drop such as chloramphenicol.

### Allergy

Are the following present?

- Watery
- Itching
- Slight burning sensation
- Eyelids slightly swollen
- Both eyes affected
- Do the symptoms occur
  - at the same time each year (eg hayfever)?
  - throughout the year (perennial hayfever)?
- Accompanied by sneezing, blocked or runny nose

No

Yes

Recommend an antihistamine, either oral and/or eye drops.

### Environmental or minor irritation

The minor redness and soreness is likely due to the environment, activity or a minor irritant.

Examples include:

#### Environment or activity

- sun
- wind
- dry climate
- air conditioning
- heating
- hot blowing air
- high altitudes
- computer use
- reading

#### Minor irritants

- dusty, smoky or polluted atmospheres
- chlorine from swimming
- shampoo
- dust
- eyelash in the eye

Yes

### Recommend Pharmacy Only Murine irritation & redness relief eye drops

Contains naphazoline hydrochloride which is a local vasoconstrictor and acts by narrowing the blood vessels in the eye, thereby soothing the irritation and removing the redness.

It has a fast acting and long lasting action.

**Murine irritation & redness relief is the strongest naphazoline drop available.**

They are suitable for adults 12 years and over.

One or two drops of Murine can be applied to each eye, two or three times per day.

Do not use at the same time as contact lenses. Lenses can be re-inserted about 15 minutes after use.

See overleaf for full product information.

keep for quick reference

**Warnings:** If eye symptoms persist, inform your customer to consult their doctor.

**Disclaimer** – Prestige Brands (UK) Limited, the owner of the Murine® brand, is not providing any medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. The content provided in this Guide is for informational purposes only and is intended to assist Pharmacists regarding recommendations for minor irritations and redness of the eye. In no event should the Guide be used by a Pharmacist as a substitute for Pharmacist's professional judgment based on the customer's circumstances. Certain references to third-party information have been provided in the Guide for information purposes only but have not been verified or validated by Prestige Brands (UK) Limited. Prestige Brands (UK) Limited does not recommend or endorse any third-party information and your use of any information in the Guide is solely at your own risk.

<sup>1</sup> NHS Direct Patient Information Leaflets. [www.cks.nhs.uk/patient\\_information\\_leaflet/Conjunctivitis\\_infective](http://www.cks.nhs.uk/patient_information_leaflet/Conjunctivitis_infective)

<sup>2</sup> NHS Clinical Knowledge Summaries. <http://www.cks.nhs.uk/eyes>