Dear parent or guardian:
A child in our program has conjunctivitis (pink eye).

**WHAT IS IT?**
Conjunctivitis (pink eye) is an infection or irritation of the eye. It can be caused by a variety of bacteria and viruses, often accompanying a respiratory illness (e.g., cold or ear infection). It can also be caused by chemicals (e.g., smoke, make-up), allergies (e.g., pollen), and other irritants (e.g., dust). Conjunctivitis causes redness of the whites of the eyes, and crusty eyelashes when the child wakes up. Children might complain of a gritty or itchy feeling in the eyes and sensitivity to light. Conjunctivitis can begin in one eye, but usually ends up involving both eyes. The symptoms typically last for 3-5 days.

**HOW IS IT SPREAD?** Infectious conjunctivitis (i.e., caused by bacteria or virus) is spread by contact with secretions from the eye, nasal mucus, and saliva. It can spread through droplets coughed or sneezed into the air, and secretions on hands, tissues, linens, and make-up.

**WHEN IS IT CONTAGIOUS?**
Until active infection passes.

**HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED AND TREATED?**
Children with conjunctivitis should be seen by their health care provider. The health care provider might prescribe antibiotic eye drops or ointment to treat infectious conjunctivitis.

**SHOULD THE CHILD STAY AT HOME?**
A child with infectious conjunctivitis should stay home until 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment and until there is no discharge from the eyes. If there is not pus present, then the child does not need to be excluded.

**HOW CAN WE LIMIT THE SPREAD?**
- Encourage children not to rub their eyes. Have children wash their hands after touching their eyes and nose.
- Use disposable tissues and paper towels. Do not share handkerchiefs, washcloths, hand towels, or bed linen.
- Wash your hands well after touching the child’s eye, applying eye medication, and blowing noses.

Taken from: Keeping kids healthy