

Tear Duct - Blocked

Definition

- The tear duct is blocked in 10% of newborns
- The tear duct is the tube that carries tears from the eye to the nose

Health Information

Symptoms

- A constant watery eye
- Tears fill the eye and run down the face. This happens even when not crying.
- A watery eye may not be noticed until 1 or 2 months old. Reason: That's when the eye starts making more tears.
- Both sides are blocked in 30% of these children.
- The eye is not red and the eyelid is not swollen.

Cause

- Caused by blockage of the lacrimal duct. This duct carries tears from the corner of the eye to the nose.
- A minor birth defect

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- A blocked tear duct is common. It happens in 10% of newborns.
- Both sides are blocked 30% of the time.
- A blocked tear duct does not need treatment, unless it becomes infected.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Pus in the Eye:

- Pus in the eye or eyelids stuck together means the eye is infected.
- It should clear up in a few days with antibiotic eyedrops.
- For pus in the eye, call your child's doctor for a prescription. Use the eyedrops as directed.
- In the meantime, here is what to do.

3. Remove Pus:

- Remove the dried and liquid pus from the eyelids. Use warm water and wet cotton balls.
- Do this each time you see pus.
- Also, clean the eyes before you use the prescription eyedrops. The eyedrops will not work unless the pus is removed first.

4. Massage:

- Some doctors suggest massage of the lacrimal sac (where tears collect). Other doctors do not. Massage is not required. The tear duct will open without any massage. If massage is advised, do it this way:
 - The lacrimal sac is in the inner lower corner of the eye. This sac can be massaged to empty it of old fluids.
 - A cotton swab works much better than a finger. Reason: The swab is smaller.
 - Start at the inner corner of the eyelid and press upward. Be very gentle. Do this twice a day.
 - Fluid and mucus should come out of the lacrimal sac.

5. **Prevention of Infections:**

- Always wash your hands before touching the eye
- Rinse the eyelids off with warm water twice a day.

6. **What to Expect:**

- Over 90% of tear ducts open up on their own.
- This should happen by the time your child is 12 months of age.
- If your child is over 12 months old, talk to your child's doctor. Your child may need to see an eye doctor. They use a small probe to open up the tear duct.

Call Your Doctor If

- Eye looks infected
- Eyelid becomes red or swollen
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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