



BLOCKED TEAR DUCT

What is a blocked tear duct?

Tears from the eye normally drain into the nose through the tear duct. If this duct is blocked, tears spill over on the cheeks, even when a baby is not crying. This happens in 10% of young babies, and usually starts before the child is 1 month old. Most of the time, only one tear duct is blocked.

How long does it last?

This is a common condition. Over 90% of blocked tear ducts open up without treatment by the time a child is 1 year old. If the blockage continues after age 1 year, an ophthalmologist can open it up with a probe.

How can I take care of my child?

Massaging the lacrimal sac (in the inner, lower corner of the eye; where tears collect) is not required. The tear duct will open without any massage. If massage is recommended by your healthcare provider, do the following:

- Massage the lacrimal sac upward twice a day to help prevent infection
- Start at the inner corner of the eye, and gently press upward using a cotton swab. A small amount of clear fluid should come out. Always wash your hands carefully before doing this. Your provider can teach you the correct technique.

Because of poor drainage, eyes with blocked tear ducts become easily infected. If the eye becomes infected, it is very important to begin antibiotic eyedrops and to stop the massage.

When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- The eyelid becomes very red and swollen
- A red lump appears at the inner lower corner of the eyelid

Call during office hours if:

- Yellow discharge occurs
- The eye is still watering after your child is 1 year old
- You have other concerns or questions