

DEFINITION

- Continuously watery eye
- Tears running down the face even without crying
- During crying, nostril on blocked side remains dry
- Onset before 1 month of age
- Eye not red and eyelid not swollen (unless the soggy tissues become infected)
- This diagnosis must be confirmed by a physician.

Cause

Your child probably has a blocked tear duct on that side. This means that the channel that normally carries tears from the eye to the nose is blocked. Although the obstruction is present at birth, the delay in onset of symptoms can be explained by the occasional delay in tear production until the age of 3 or 4 weeks in some babies.

Expected Course

This is a common condition, affecting 6% of newborns. Both sides are blocked 30% of the time. Over 90% of blocked tear ducts open up spontaneously by the time the child is 12 months of age. If the obstruction persists beyond 12 months of age, an ophthalmologist (eye specialist) can open it with a special probe.

HOME CARE FOR PREVENTING EYE INFECTION

Because of poor drainage, eyes with blocked tear ducts become easily infected. The infected eye pro-

duces a yellow discharge. To keep the eye free of infection, massage the lacrimal sac (where tears collect) twice daily to empty it of old fluids. A small amount of clear fluid should come out. Always wash your hands carefully before doing this. The lacrimal sac is located in the inner lower corner of the eye. Start at the inner corner of the eye and press *upward* using a cotton swab. The massage technique is somewhat controversial. Some physicians recommend massaging downward in hopes of washing out the plug that blocks the lower duct. If the eye becomes infected, it is very important to begin antibiotic eye drops. Some physicians recommend not massaging the sac at all. Massage in either direction must be done gently, since it may irritate the eyelid tissue and contribute to infection.



CALL OUR OFFICE

IMMEDIATELY if

- The eyelids are red or swollen.
- A red lump appears at the inner lower corner of the eyelid.

During regular hours if

- Lots of yellow discharge is present.
- Your child reaches 12 months of age and the eye is still watering.
- You have other concerns or questions.