

Tear Duct Blocked

Symptoms

- A continuously watery eye (excessive tearing)
- Tears fill the eye and occasionally run down the face, even without crying
- The eye is not red and the eyelid is not swollen (unless the soggy tissues become infected)
- Present at birth (10% of newborns)

Cause

- Caused by blockage of the channel (lacrima duct) that normally carries tears from the eye to the nose
- Onset of excessive tearing can be delayed until 1 or 2 months old when tear production increases.

Care Advice

1. Reassurance:
 - a. A blocked tear duct is a common condition that affects 10% of newborns.
 - b. A blocked tear duct requires no treatment unless it becomes infected.
2. Pus in the Eye:
 - a. Lots of pus in the eye or eyelids stuck together (EXCEPTION: only in corner of the eye) means a secondary [infection](#) has occurred.
 - b. This is common with blocked tear ducts and should clear up in a few days with prescription antibiotic eyedrops or ointment.
 - c. Call or see your child's doctor for a prescription. In the meantime, do the following:
3. Remove Pus: Remove the dried and liquid pus from the eyelids with warm water and wet cotton balls several times per day. Once you have antibiotic eyedrops, they will not work unless the pus is removed each time before they are put in.
4. Massage:
 - a. Some physicians recommend routine massage of the lacrimal sac (where tears collect) twice a day, others do not. Massage is not required. The tear duct will open without any massage. If massage is recommended, do the following:
 - b. The lacrimal sac is in the inner lower corner of the eye. This sac can be massaged to empty it of old fluids and to check for early infection.
 - c. A cotton swab works much better than a finger.



- d. Start at the inner corner of the eye and press upward. Be very gentle.
 - e. Clear fluid should come out of the corner of the eye.
5. Expected Course: Over 90% of tear ducts open up spontaneously by the time the child is 12 months of age.

When To Call

Call Your Doctor Now (night or day) If

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Eyelid is very red or very swollen
- Red lump at inner corner of eyelid
- [Cloudy cornea](#)

Call Your Doctor Within 24 Hours (between 9 am and 4 pm) If

- You think your child needs to be seen
- Pus in the eye
- Eyelid is red or swollen

Call Your Doctor During Weekday Office Hours If

- You have other questions or concerns
- Diagnosis has never been confirmed by a physician
- Age over 12 months old

Adapted from The American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) at www.healthychildren.org

