

What to look out for.

If a **tender red lump or swelling appears** in the inner corner of the eyelids, this can indicate a serious infection of the tear sac (dacryocystitis).

If you are worried, please call the advice line below or alternatively you can go to your local Accident and Emergency for a further examination.

Contact Details

Eye Unit / Orthoptics:

01782 676001 option 5

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Patient Information Leaflet

Blocked Tear Duct In Babies



Please speak to a member of staff if you need this leaflet in large print, braille, audio or another language

Introduction

This leaflet provides you with information on blocked tear ducts in babies. If after reading it you have any concerns or require further explanation, please discuss this with a member of the Healthcare Team who has been caring for you.

What are blocked tear ducts?

The eye is kept moist and healthy by a film of tears that are continuously being produced. Every time we blink the tears are being produced and swept towards the corner of the eye by the nose and drained into two tiny tubes called tear ducts (NLD or nasolacrimal ducts).

A blocked tear duct is a partial or complete blockage in the nasolacrimal duct system.

The cause of blocked tear ducts

In babies, the most common cause of a blocked tear duct is the failure of the thin tissue at the end of the tear duct to open normally at or near birth.

Other less common causes of blocked tear ducts include infections, abnormal growth of the nasal bone, or a closed or undeveloped opening in the corner of the eye (the punctum), where the tears drain into the lacrimal ducts.

Symptoms of blocked tear ducts

Symptoms may get worse if your child is suffering with a cold or sinus infection, or if they are exposed to wind and cold weather.

Symptoms include:

- Excessive watering of the eyes (epiphoria).
- An infection that may develop in the eye's drainage system. Inflammation may develop around the eye or nose.
- Yellow mucus can build up in the corner of the eye and the eyelids may stick together.

Diagnosis/treatment for blocked tear ducts

A blocked tear duct is diagnosed by the doctor, nurse or orthoptist, based on medical history and physical examination. Most babies born with blocked tear ducts do not need treatment as this usually resolves by 12 months of age..

- The eyes need to be kept clean by regularly bathing them using cool boiled water.
- Massaging the duct to keep it drained will help to prevent infection.
- Your GP can prescribe some anti-biotic drops to treat any infection your child develops due to the tear duct being blocked. These will not clear the obstruction.
- At the age of 18th months if the lacrimal duct remains blocked, a quick probing procedure to open the passage may be carried out under general anaesthetic. Antibiotics are given for long-term infections.
- Surgery may be carried out for structural problems or abnormal growths.