

Blocked Tear Ducts

There are tiny tubes or ducts that normally drain the tears from the eyes into the cavities near the nose. Sometimes these tiny tear ducts are not completely open at birth or become clogged later on. Excess tears then well up in the eyes.

The tears back up, causing wetness or pooling. As the watery layer evaporates, a soft mucous discharge accumulates, which can then dry and become crusty. Many newborns don't start making tears until they are about two weeks old or a little older, so you may not notice the symptoms of a blocked tear duct until then, even if your baby was born with it.

Care Advice

- Reassurance- This is a common condition that affects many newborns. It can occur in one or both eyes. No treatment is required unless it gets infected.
- Wash away the drainage- Using clear water on a clean, soft cloth, gently wipe away the discharge. Do this several times a day or as often as necessary.
- Massage- Some physicians recommend routine massage of the lacrimal sac (where the tears collect) twice daily, others do not. Massage is not required. The tear duct will open without any massage.
- Expected Course- As your baby grows, so do the tiny tear ducts. Most blocked tear ducts open and drain normally within a few weeks to a few months.

Occasionally, tear ducts may remain closed because the nasal end of the ducts is sealed with membranous tissue. If they haven't opened and are still not draining normally by the time your baby is 9-12 months old, we may refer you to a pediatric eye specialist.

Call our office at (301) 279-6750 if:

- Your baby develops a fever of 100.4 or higher
- The white part of the eye appears red or irritated
- The eyelids look swollen

You may also email us at advicenurse@potomacpediatrics.com with your questions!