

Blocked Tear Duct

Brief Version

What is a blocked tear duct?

When the pathway that carries tears gets blocked, that is called a blocked tear duct. This happens often in very young babies. Most of the time, only one tear duct is blocked at a time.

Your baby may have a blocked tear duct when:

- One eye is always watery.
- Tears run down the face even when your baby does not cry.
- When your baby cries, the nostril on the blocked side is still dry.
- The eye on the blocked side is not red, and the eyelid is not swollen.
- The problem starts before your child is 1 month old.

How can I take care of my child?

Gently rub the inner, lower corner of your baby's eye with a clean cotton swab. That helps get rid of old tears that can build up. To do this:

- Wash your hands.
- Start at the inner corner of the eye.
- Gently press upward.
- A small amount of clear fluid should come out.

Call your doctor right away if:

- Your baby's eyelid is very red or swollen.
- There is a red lump at the inner lower corner of the eyelid.

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- There is a lot of yellow discharge from your baby's eye.
- Your child is more than 1 year old.
- You have other questions or concerns.

Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books.

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