

Dr. Glasser's Blocked Tear Duct Handout

Blocked tear duct is a common condition in babies. It usually starts to show up within the first 3 months of life as tearing and goopy discharge from the eye. Many times it will be only one eye, but both eyes can be affected and it can switch back and forth. The affected eye seems wetter and "goopy" compared to the other one, and the symptoms are more noticeable when the baby has had the eyes closed for a while like after sleeping.

The good news is that for most all babies who have it, the blocked tear ducts open on their own by or before 15 months. For the few who don't resolve on their own, a referral to the ophthalmologist for a simple outpatient surgery is made to fix it.

Luckily, the eyes don't usually get infected. The eyes produce tears and mucus all the time to keep the eyes moisturized and free of debris and germs. Sometimes the mucus can look a little thick and slightly yellow to light green if it gets dried out, and this is normal. When there is an infection, the mucus tends to really be copious and very thick and green and there is often redness, swelling and puffiness of the lids on that side that doesn't go away within an hour of cleaning the lids after the baby wakes. Often the white part of the eye will also be red. When this occurs, the baby needs an appointment in the office and will probably need to have antibiotic drops in the eyes for about 5 days to clear the infection.

To remove the mucus in general, take a warm wet washcloth and wipe from the outer corner of the eye to the inner corner until it is all gone.

Some people believe that massaging the tear duct helps it to open up over time. Take your pinky finger with a short finger nail and massage over the inner corner of the eye in a circular motion a few times and pull down toward the nose 3-4 times a day.

If you are ever concerned that your baby has an eye infection, call 248-7337 for an appointment. Check out www.drglasser.com for additional information.

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