



MIDDLEBORO PEDIATRICS

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BLOCKED TEAR DUCT

Symptoms

Continuously watery eye

Tears running down the face even without crying

During crying, nostril on blocked side remains dry

Onset at birth to 1 month of age

Eye not red and eyelid not swollen (unless the soggy tissues become infected)

Cause

Your child probably has a blocked tear duct on that side. This means that the channel that normally carries tears from the eye to the nose is blocked. Although the obstruction is present at birth, the delay in onset of symptoms can be explained by the occasional delay in tear production until the age of 3 or 4 weeks in some babies. Both sides are blocked 30% of the time.

Expected Course

This is a common condition, affecting 6% of newborns. Over 90% of the blocked tear ducts open up spontaneously by the time the child is 12 months of age. If the obstruction persists beyond 12 months of age, an ophthalmologist (eye specialist) can open it with a probe.

HOME CARE FOR PREVENTING INFECTION

Because of poor drainage, eyes with blocked tear ducts become easily infected. The infected eye produces a yellow discharge. To keep the eye free of infection, massage the lacrimal sac (where tears collect) twice a day. Always wash your hands carefully before doing this. The lacrimal sac is located in the inner lower corner of the eye. This sac should be massaged to empty it of old fluids and to check for infection. Start at the inner corner of the eye and press upward using a cotton swab. (Caution: Massaging downward is not helpful and may lead to infection). If the eye becomes infected (yellow or green drainage appears), it is very important to begin an antibiotic eye ointment.

CALL OUR OFFICE

Immediately if:

The eyelids are red or swollen

A red lump appears at the inner lower corner of the eyelid

During Office Hours if:

The eyelids are stuck together with pus after naps.

Much yellow discharge is present

Your child reaches 12 months of age and the eye is still watering

You have other concerns or questions.