



BLOCKED TEAR DUCTS

Tears normally drain through small openings in the corners of the upper and lower eyelids and then enter the nose through a duct. Tear duct obstruction prevents tears from draining through normally and often causes the eyelids to be covered in mucous.

What causes tear duct obstruction in children?

There can be many reasons but the most common cause is the failure of a membrane at the end of the tear duct to open normally at or near the time of birth. Other causes include

- Absent punctum (upper and/or lower eyelid)
- Narrow or stenotic system
- Infection
- Nasal bone that obstructs the tear duct entering the nose

Your medical practitioner will advise you regarding the cause of the obstruction.

How common is tear duct obstruction in children?

Over 5% of infants have symptoms affecting one or both eyes, however over 90% clear spontaneously during the first year of life.

What are the signs/symptoms of tear duct obstruction?

Tears may well up on the surface of the eye and overflow onto the eyelashes, eyelids, and down the cheek. The eyelids can become stuck together with yellowish-green discharge.

Rarely, severe cases result in a serious infection of the tear duct system (dacryocystitis)

How is tear duct obstruction diagnosed?

An Ophthalmologist is able to perform certain tests to confirm the diagnosis. It is important that the eyes be examined by a professional so that a correct diagnosis is given.

Treating Blocked Tear Ducts

What is the treatment for a blocked tear duct?

Fortunately, tear duct obstruction resolves spontaneously in a high percentage of children. When obstruction is persistent, tear duct probing may be recommended.