



# Nasolacrimal Duct Obstruction

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This material will help you understand a nasolacrimal duct obstruction and how it is treated.

## **What is a nasolacrimal duct obstruction?**

Nasolacrimal duct obstruction is a blocked tear duct. Tears normally drain through small openings in the corners of the eyelids into the tear sac. They then enter the nose through the nasolacrimal duct. If your duct is fully or partially blocked, tears cannot drain normally. Tears may well up on the surface of your eye and overflow onto your eyelashes, eyelids, and cheeks. It may look like you are crying. Other symptoms of a blocked tear duct include:

- Swelling
- Eye discharge or mucous
- Crusty eyelashes
- Frequent eye infections
- Blurred vision

## **What causes a nasolacrimal duct obstruction?**

A blocked tear duct can be congenital (meaning you are born with it) or it can be acquired (develops later in life). The most common cause of a congenital blocked tear duct is that part of the tear duct (valve of Hanser) does not open normally when an infant is developing. Causes of acquired nasolacrimal duct obstruction include:

- Frequent sinus (nose) infections
- Age-related changes to the nose
- Nose trauma (like a broken nose)
- Nose polyps (growths)

## **How is a nasolacrimal duct obstruction diagnosed?**

An eye doctor can diagnose a nasolacrimal duct obstruction through your medical history and a complete eye exam. As part of the exam, your eye doctor may do special tests to check for blockage in the tear drainage system. One test that your doctor may perform involves flushing fluid in your tear duct opening. If the fluid does not flow into your nose or throat, you will be diagnosed with a blocked tear duct.

### **How is a nasolacrimal duct obstruction treated?**

For most infants with blocked tear ducts, the condition clears on their own without surgery. Over 90% of infants no longer have symptoms by the time they are one year old. Your child's doctor may recommend massage techniques to help open up the membrane. Adults with blocked tear ducts usually require surgery to create a way for the tears to drain into the nose.

If you or your child has an eye infection, the doctor may prescribe an antibiotic ointment or drops. This will help treat discharge and matting around the eye, but it will not open the blocked duct. If your child's tear duct does not clear, a doctor may recommend a surgical treatment.

There are a few different procedures that can be used to open up a blocked tear duct and prevent it from closing again. Talk to your doctor about which procedure is right for you.

**For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.**



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/blocked-tear-duct-cause.cfm>



<http://www.aapos.org/terms/conditions/72>

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