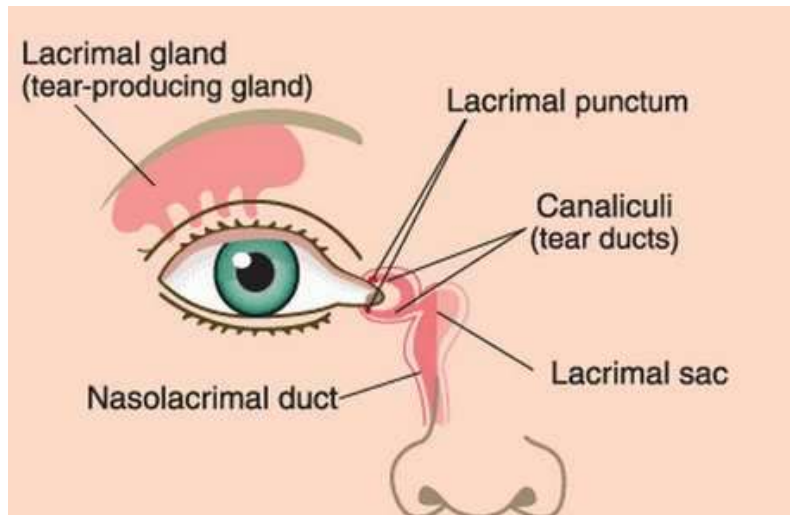


Advice for Parents

Watering Eyes in Babies



Tears are produced by a kidney bean shaped gland under the eyebrow. They are washed across the eye by the blinking lids and pumped through two tiny ducts at the nose. They drain into a sac you can feel in the little depression between the corner of the eye and the nose. From there the tears drain through a tube into the lining of the nose. That is why the nose runs when we cry. The tear drainage system may not be draining freely at birth. It can have persistent webs which spontaneously clear. If the system is blocked, the eye will constantly tear especially out in cold wind. The tears collect in the sac and can become infected. If the eye becomes red or the discharge becomes very green, your GP can prescribe chloramphenicol eye drops for up to 7 days.

You can improve the flow of the tears and reduce the likelihood of infections by carrying out lacrimal massage daily. Place your finger over the bony dip at the nasal corner of the affected eye. Gently massage towards the opposite ear. Sometimes you will express mucus or discharge though the ducts into the tear film. Massage can be done during sleep.

Often the tear drainage system opens spontaneously as the baby grows and the watering stops.

If watering persists beyond 1 year, the drainage system is unlikely to open. At that stage you could request referral to a hospital eye clinic to discuss a procedure to probe the tear system with a view to clearing any blockage. This requires to be carried out under general anaesthetic.