Eye: Tear Duct Massage

Tears are produced by the tear gland (Picture 1). Tears are in the eye all the time - not just when someone cries. The tears keep the eyes from feeling dry. Tears also help to wash away any dirt that gets into the eyes.

Tears normally leave the eye through an opening on the inside corner of each eye (Picture 1). They flow through a tube (the tear duct) into a tear sac under the skin alongside the nose. From the tear sac they flow into the back of the nose.

If this drainage system gets blocked, the tears will flow onto the child's face. It will seem like the eye is "watering" all the time. Sometimes there is also a discharge that makes it seem like the child has an eye infection. Tear duct massage is a way to help to open the duct and let the tears flow into the tear sac (Picture 2). Usually, the problem will get better with this treatment.

How to massage the tear duct

- Wash your hands well before and after the massage.
- If your doctor has ordered eye drops put 1 drop of _______________ medicine in the eye to be massaged (_________eye).
- Place the tip of your index finger against the side of the child's nose, next to the affected eye (Picture 2).
- Press firmly and move your index finger in short downward strokes 3 to 5 times.
- Repeat these steps 3 times a day: morning, noon and night.

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When to call the doctor

Call the Nationwide Children’s Hospital Eye Clinic at (614) 722-4075 or your child's doctor or clinic if either of the following occurs:

- If the watering or discharge continues after 6 months of age or if eye becomes red.
- If the side of the child's nose becomes very red and swollen, stop the massage and call the Eye Clinic.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse or call ________________.