

Treating watery eyes caused by a narrow tear duct opening with a perforated punctal plug

Ophthalmology Department

Information for Patients

Produced: November 2021

Review: November 2024

Leaflet number: 259 Version: 2

Introduction

One possible cause of a watery eye is when the tear canals (also known as tear 'ducts') at the inner corner of the eye become narrow (stenosis) or close completely. This can happen for many reasons, including ageing, injury, and infections.

This is one of several conditions that can lead to a watery eye, and some people may have more than one problem at the same time causing this.

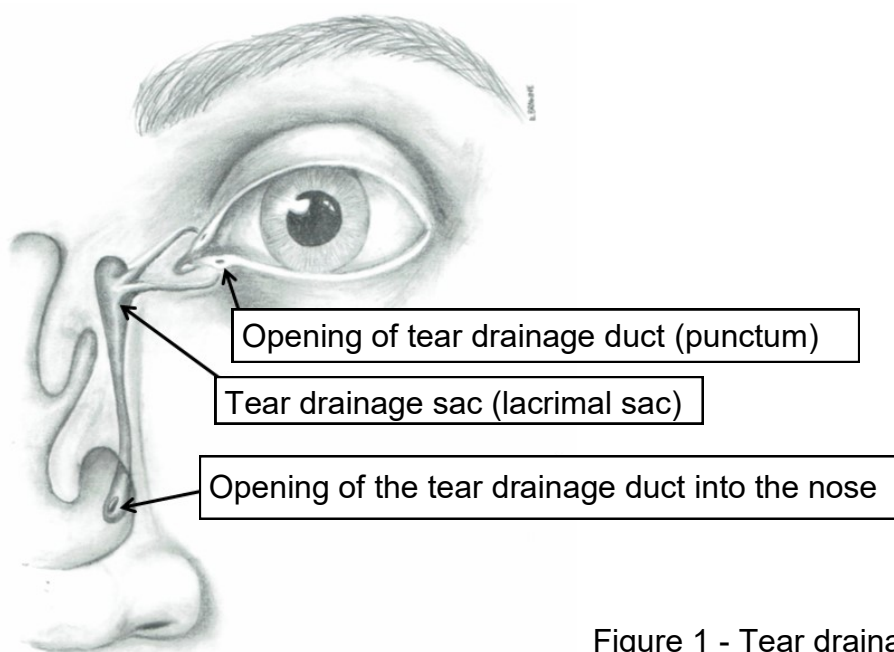


Figure 1 - Tear drainage system (lacrimal system).

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What is the treatment for this?

A perforated punctal plug can be put into the opening of the tear canal to allow drainage of tears. These are very small silicone arrowhead shaped tubes as shown in the picture below. They don't actually 'plug' the canal as they have a channel that allow tears to flow through.



(with permission: Moshifar M, Moran Eye Centre, University of Utah)

When are they used?

When you are in clinic your eyes will be looked at closely under magnification to look for any blockage (punctal stenosis) at the opening of the tear canal.

We also need to look for blockages further down the tear drainage system between the eyes and the nose. This is usually done at your outpatient visit by 'syndring' to check if water can be flushed down into the throat from the tear canal. Sometimes the canal is so narrow that this is not possible. If there is a blockage further down the system, inserting this plug will not work to reduce watering from your eye.

How is a punctal plug inserted?

The procedure is usually done in theatre. You will have a small injection of local anaesthetic into the skin near your eye to numb the area. The plug will be inserted under a microscope.

The procedure takes about 10 minutes, however, as you may be one of many patients waiting to have a procedure in theatre on the day, you may need to spend up to half a day on the ward.

Aftercare

You may have mild bruising and/ or swelling for a few days afterwards. You will be given eye drops to use for 2 weeks.

You can do all activities as normal, but you should not go swimming for 2 weeks after your procedure.

When is it removed?

The plug is usually left in place for 2 to 3 months and taken out in clinic with a pair of fine forceps, without you feeling any pain. While the plugs are in place they usually stretch the opening of the tear canal. This should reduce watering from your eye even after the plug is taken out.

What is the success rate?

If there are no other factors causing watery eyes, insertion of this plug can treat the problem in around 80% of patients.

What are the possible complications?

This is a safe procedure, however possible complications can include the following:

- The plug may come out on their own (25 to 50%). This is not usually a problem if it happens more than 3 weeks after the procedure. If it happens before 3 weeks, you may need to repeat the procedure in a few weeks.
- Discomfort when the plug is inserted. This is usually mild and doesn't last long. Your eyes will feel back to normal within a week.
- Irritation/ itching/ feeling of having something in your eye. These will go away once the plug is taken out.
- Dry eye. This is uncommon but may need treatment if it is causing you a problem.
- The plug moves down the tear canal ('lost'). This is rare but can cause the watering or any infection to become worse. You may need surgery in the future to remove the plug.

- A lump can develop around the opening of the tear canal (pyogenic granuloma). This may get better with drops or you may need a small procedure to remove it.

Contact details

If you have any further questions please contact:

Oculoplastic Specialist Team on 0116 204 7971 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)

Eye Casualty Department on Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays
(8.30am to 12.30pm) on 0116 258 6273.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk



LEICESTER'S
RESEARCH

Leicester's Hospitals is a research active trust so you may find research happening on your ward or in your clinic. To find out about the benefits of research and become involved yourself, speak to your clinician or nurse, call 0116 258 8351 or visit www.leicestersresearch.nhs.uk/patient-and-public-involvement