

Patient information

Blocked tear duct - syringe and probe surgery

What is a blocked tear duct?

A blocked tear duct is a common condition which affects the drainage of tears from the eyes. This causes watery sticky eyes.

The tear ducts pass from the upper and lower lids and carry tears down to the back of the nose. They should open at birth, but occasionally they remain closed. The tears then have nowhere to drain to so they pool up causing a watery and often sticky eye.

Most blocked tear ducts (8 out of 10) open without any treatment by the child's first birthday. If this does not happen, a small operation is required. During the procedure a very thin probe is passed into the tear duct to clear the blockage. This procedure is not painful. A fluorescent dye is syringed into the tear duct to make sure that it is open at the end of the procedure. The procedure is called syringe and probe.

What does the procedure involve?

Pre-assessment

Two to three weeks before surgery your child will be seen again by a doctor and also seen by a paediatric nurse to assess their general health before undergoing a general anaesthetic and to inform you about what will happen on the day.

Operation

The operation is normally carried out on a Monday morning and an anaesthetist with paediatric experience will see them on arrival at the Eye Treatment centre. One parent may accompany the child to theatre and stay with them until they are asleep. In general the operation takes about 15 minutes and then the child is in the recovery area for a short time before returning to you on the ward.

Post-operative care

The eye is not covered after the operation and there should not be any discomfort. If your child appears unsettled some Calpol may help. There may be some blood stained tears on the day of surgery. Rarely there may be some bleeding from the nose on the day of surgery.

You may take your child home after a minimum of 2 hours providing everyone is happy. You may be prescribed eye drops and may or may not need a follow-up appointment.

If you have any other worries or questions please do ask us before surgery.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)

<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

