

Ophthalmology Directorate

Watery Eyes (Epiphora) – Information for Patients

The eye produces a small volume of tears all the time to keep the surface of the eye lubricated. These are drained away through tiny holes in the inner corner of the eyelids. If any part of the tear drainage system is blocked, the tears overflow down your face. In addition, tears and microorganisms may build up in the blocked drainage system, resulting in an infection.

To identify where the tear drainage system may be blocked and to help the doctor decide what type of operation you may need; the doctor may gently probe and syringe the drainage system. The procedure is to make a diagnosis and plan treatment but a small number of patients might notice improvement of their symptoms. The procedure will not result in worsening of your pre-existing problem.

Syringing and probing: what will happen?

- This is a simple procedure where a salty solution (saline) is pushed through the tear ducts via a blunt-tipped syringe to wash out the drainage system.
- When you enter the examination room, you will be asked to lay on the couch.
- Drops will be put into your eyes to numb them. This will make the procedure more comfortable for you.
- The probe will be used to open the tear duct and feel where the blockage is.
- The tear duct is then washed through using the saline.
- The doctor will then ask you if you can feel any liquid at the back of your throat.
- This procedure will take approximately 10 minutes.
- Be aware that your throat might be numb for several minutes after this investigation.

- You will be able to drive after this procedure, if you have not had dilating drops put in your eyes. The doctor will tell you if you have had dilating drops.



Image: provided by Mr M Saldana, Consultant Ophthalmologist

Summary:

- The system that drains your tears away from your eyes may be blocked.
- Your doctor would like to examine this system and push liquid through it to find out where the blockage is.
- This will help your doctor plan further treatment to help your watery eyes.

Contact details:

If you would like further advice or have any questions, please contact us on the number below:

Ophthalmic Outpatients Department:
01603 288066
(Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm)