

TEARING IN ADULTS

HOW DO TEARS DRAIN FROM THE EYE?

As new tears are produced, old tears drain from an eye through two small openings called the upper and lower **puncta**. They are located at the inside corner of the upper and lower eyelids near the nose. The tears then move through a passage called the **canaliculus** and into the **lacrimal sac**. From the sac, the tears then drop down the tear duct, called the **nasolacrimal** duct, and drain into the back of the nose and throat. That is why your nose runs when you cry.

EXCESSIVE TEARING MAY OCCUR FROM THE FOLLOWING:

- injury, birth defects, infection or other blockage of the lacrimal (tear) drainage system;
- eyelid or eyelash disorders;
- infection in the eye;
- wind, smoke, fumes or other environmental irritants;
- glaucoma;
- certain medications;
- allergic reaction;
- eyestrain;
- dry eyes;
- foreign material in the eye;
- scratch on the eye.

HOW IS THE CAUSE OF EXCESSIVE TEARING DETERMINED?

A thorough eye examination by an ophthalmologist is necessary to determine the cause of excessive tearing. He or she may also:

- irrigate your tear drainage system with fluid to make sure the pathway is open;
- measure tear production;
- measure eye pressure;
- illuminate the tear drain with a fluorescent dye test;
- perform computerized tomography (CT) scanning.

HOW IS EXCESSIVE TEARING TREATED?

Once your ophthalmologist determines the cause, treatment may include one or more of the following:

- surgical opening of the blocked drainage system;
- surgery to repair an injured drainage system;
- removal of an in turned eyelash or foreign body in the eye;
- adding a new opening from the lacrimal sac into the nose, a procedure known as *dacryocystorhinostomy* (DCR);
- use of lubricating eye drops or ointment;
- insertion of an artificial tear duct implant.

Your ophthalmologist will discuss the most appropriate form of treatment with you.