



## Sticky eye

### My child has a sticky eye

**There are several reasons why your infant/ child may have a sticky eye.**

It is a very common condition in newborn babies and, most of the time, it will look like a discharge from one or both eyes, which may not be due to an infection. If your baby's white's of the eye remain clear of any redness, but there is a discharge, it is likely to be due to blocked tear ducts. Approximately 1 in 5 babies are born with tear ducts that have not fully developed, affecting one or both eyes. It can last for several months. You will normally be advised by your health visitor to just wait and see if the sticky eye improves over time. If the tear duct is still blocked and continuing to cause a sticky eye by about 12 months of age, see your GP who may refer your baby to an eye specialist.

It's not necessary to go to your local casualty department (Accident & Emergency or A&E) with sticky or watery eyes.

### My baby has conjunctivitis

Babies can also suffer from conjunctivitis. This is inflammation of the thin layer of tissue that covers the front of the eye. The symptoms are similar to a sticky eye, but the whites of your baby's eye will be pink or red. Conjunctivitis in your newborn baby can be caused by a blocked tear duct or a bacterial or viral infection - this is known as conjunctivitis.

If your child is experiencing any symptoms of discharge, redness or swelling of the eye/s, please contact your midwife, health visitor or GP.

**More information on Page 2**

**For additional fact sheets see [www.ihv.org.uk](http://www.ihv.org.uk)**

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### Signs and symptoms of conjunctivitis

- A child/infant is likely to have red, itchy and sticky eyelids.
- Their eyes may be watering more than usual, and they may have a discharge which is more noticeable in the morning and when they wake up.
- If it is conjunctivitis, then the discharge will be yellow and will usually start in one eye and can spread to the other eye.

### Parent Tips for cleaning your child's/ infant's sticky eyes

**Sticky eyes usually clear up without medication but in the meantime you should:**

- Always wash your hands before and after treatment.
- Clean your baby's eyes regularly with cooled boiled water and cotton wool.
- Use a separate cotton wool ball each time you wipe the eye, wiping from the corner by the nose outwards.
- Avoid sharing towels or flannels to avoid contamination if there is an infection.
- If the cause is a blocked tear duct, it may help if you massage the tear duct every few hours using gentle pressure on the outside of the nose, near the corner of the eye.
- If the tear duct continues to be blocked at twelve months of age, then consult your GP who may refer your child to an eye specialist.
- If the GP thinks the discharge is caused by infection they will prescribe a course of antibiotic eye drops or cream.

**You can choose care at home if:**

- Your infant/child has sticky or watery eyes.
- Their eyeball is healthy and white they are not particularly bothered by their sticky or watery eyes.

**Choose your pharmacist or GP if:**

- Their eye becomes inflamed angry or red, there is yellow or green sticky crusty discharge around the eye that keeps on coming back.
- Your baby rubs his /her eye a lot or seems in pain.
- Your baby does not like to open their eyes, or light seems to hurt the baby's eye.
- You think your baby might have conjunctivitis.
- The structure of the eye lid does not seem right.

### Useful links:

NHS Choices:  
[bit.ly/1jP0aJ7](https://bit.ly/1jP0aJ7)