

Sticky eyes & eye health

Protect your baby's eyes

'Sticky eyes' are common in newborn babies and young children while their tear ducts are developing. You may see some sticky stuff in the corner of the eyes or their eyelashes may be stuck together.

It normally clears up on its own, but you may have to clean your baby's eyes regularly with damp cotton wool. Use clean, cooled boiled water.

Wipe each eye from the corner by the nose outwards. Use a clean piece of cotton wool for each wipe. Remember to wash your hands before and afterwards and avoid sharing towels to prevent spreading infection.

Conjunctivitis

The signs of 'sticky eyes' can sometimes be confused with an infection called 'conjunctivitis' which can be caused by a virus or a bacteria. With conjunctivitis the white of the eyes become red and there is more yellow or green sticky goo which comes back regularly. If you notice this and it continues for more than 24 hours, contact your health visitor or GP as it sometimes needs treating with antibiotic drops. This can be passed on easily, so wash your hands and use a separate towel for your baby.

Health visitor says

Some babies have watering eyes. Massaging the tear ducts helps to dislodge tears that have collected in the upper part of your baby's tear duct, as well as encouraging the tear duct to develop. This can be done by applying light pressure with your clean, index finger and massaging from the outer corner of your baby's eye towards their nose. Repeat several times a day for a couple of months. If this persists past one year, your baby should be referred to an eye specialist for treatment.

Source NHS choices

Eye checks

The signs of 'sticky eyes' can sometimes Babies can see when they are born but their focussing develops gradually.

Routine eye tests are offered to newborn babies and at the baby six-week check to identify any problems early on in their development. Baby's should fix their parent's gaze and follow their faces with their eyes by the age of 2-3 months. However, It's quite normal for the eyes of newborn babies to 'cross' (squint) occasionally, particularly when they're tired. Speak to your GP if this you notice this is still happening after three months of age or is happening most of the time. Left untreated, lazy eye can develop. Children with a family history (parents

or brothers and sisters) of squint or wearing glasses in childhood should be referred to an eye clinic (orthoptist) after eight months of age.

Although serious vision problems during childhood are rare, early testing ensures that any problems are picked up and managed as early as possible. All children should go to the optician for annual eye tests from five years of age.

[Please see our eye health leaflet for more information.](#)

1

Is there discharge in the corner of your baby's eye and do their eyelashes appear to be stuck together?

2

Sticky eyes is a common condition that affects most babies - most cases do not need antibiotic drops.

3

Use cooled boiled water on a clean piece of cotton wool for each wipe.

Source: DoH 2006.