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DACRYOCYSTORHINOSTOMY (DCR)

Q *What is DCR?*

A It is an operation for watering eyes.

Q *What are the causes of watering eyes?*

A There are many reasons why an eye may water. Tears are made in a gland beneath the outer end of the upper eyelid. With each blink the tears are spread across the eye towards two small collecting channels at the inner ends of the upper and lower eyelids. From these channels the tears pass into a system of tubes and they eventually empty into the back of the nose.

If there is a block in any of the tubes which take the tears away from the eye watering may occur. Alternatively, if the surface of the eye is irritated, extra tears are released into the eye by the tear gland and this may cause a watering.

Q *When is a DCR operation needed?*

A The most common place for a block to occur is in the last tube before the tears empty into the nose. A DCR operation is appropriate for a block at this level but not for a block anywhere else in the drainage system of the tears.

Q *How is the DCR operation done?*

A It is normally performed under general anaesthesia with you asleep. An incision is made on the side of the nose close to the inner corner of the eye and a passage is created which allows the tears to empty directly into the nose instead of having to pass down the tube which is blocked. In this way the block is bypassed. A fine plastic tube is often inserted from the inner corner of the eye into the nose. It causes no problem and can hardly be seen. It is removed with simple anaesthetic eye drops after three months.

Q *Does the incision cause an obvious scar?*

A The wound is about 2cm long and it usually heals very well. The scar is obvious in the first two or three months after DCR surgery, but it usually fades and in most people it is hardly noticeable. It is very uncommon for it to be unsightly.

Q *How successful is DCR surgery?*

A Watering is cured in more than 85% of people.

Q *Are there any complications from DCR surgery?*

A The main complication is that the eye continues to water. As mentioned above, this can occur in 10-15% of people. Occasionally, bleeding can occur during the 24-48 hours after DCR surgery, but care is taken during the surgery to try to prevent this.

Q *Are there alternative operations to a DCR?*

A Yes. The 'endoscopic DCR' operation is performed with a special telescopic device - an 'endoscope' - passed up through the nose. There is no skin incision so no scar. The results are not quite as good, in terms of cure for the watering, as the normal DCR.

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