

Why Do We Have Tears?

by Allen Hunter

Think about times when you've cried. At first you felt unhappy. Maybe your mouth drooped. Then your eyes scrunched up and got watery. Soon tears were rolling down your cheeks.

And sometimes tears drop from your eyes when you are happy. If you laugh very, very hard, tears may spill down your face. But tears have a more important job than showing how you feel.

All day long your eyes sit in a bath of tears. These tears keep your eyes clean and healthy. They wash away dirt and germs and other things that get in your eyes. For instance, your eyes water when smoke gets in them. That's because smoke is made of things that bother your eyes. Extra tears come to wash the smoke away.

Your eyes also need tears to keep them wet. Your eyes must be wet so that they can move smoothly. All day long, your eyes are busy looking here and there. They move quickly from one thing to another. Right now as you're reading, your eyes are moving along to each word. If your eyes didn't move, you'd have to turn your head to look at things that weren't right in front of you! If you didn't have tears, your eyes couldn't move. And soon you would be blind.

But where do all these tears come from?

Under each eyelid are tiny sacs called tear glands. That's where tears are made. Every time you blink your eyes, some tears are pushed out of these glands. The tears wash over your eyes and soothe them.

When you're not laughing or crying your tears away, where do they go? Tears leave your eyes the way water leaves a sink. The tears go away through small holes in your lower eyelid. These holes are called tear ducts. Some of these holes lead into your nose. Many times when you cry, the tears drop down through your nose – and it starts to run. The drops that fall from your nose are your tears.

Maybe you don't like baths, but your eyes can't do without

them. All day long, tears wash your eyes to keep them bright and healthy.