

# Exercises To Keep The Eyes Healthy



From

**NATURAL**  Eye Care

# NATURAL Eye Care

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## OVERVIEW

Healthy vision has long been valued in many cultures throughout the world. Over time, specific eye exercises have been developed to help maintain the precious gift of sight. Much like any other part of the body, the eyes require exercise in order to function and perform at their best. Unfortunately, the increased use of computers, television viewing, and engagement in near work both at school and on the job has created chronic, excessive stress on individuals' visual systems. When you consider these factors, is it any wonder that 75% of students in graduate school are nearsighted? Our eyes and bodies were not designed to withstand this ongoing stress, stress that we believe contributes to poorer vision, eye disease, and often neck and back problems as well.

Eye exercises can strengthen eye muscles, help maintain flexible lenses, and help preserve sharper vision with just five to ten minutes of daily practice. All you need to do is choose a few of the eye exercises to do during each session. For those who spend hours on the computer each day, it is important take a two to three minute break each hour to do eye exercises. ("Palming" is an excellent exercise to do during each break.)

The exercises below do not represent a vision therapy program. The Optometric Extension Program can help you develop an individualized vision therapy program or set you up with an evaluation. Contact them at 410.561.3791 or visit their website at <http://www.oepf.org> to find a qualified vision therapist near you.

This document includes three sections:

- 1) Basic eye exercises
- 2) Acupressure eye massage instructions
- 3) Self-help: an overview of lifestyle considerations important to promoting health

## **BASIC EYE EXERCISES**

### *Exercises To Help Keep The Eyes Healthy*

#### *RULES FOR SUCCESS*

In order to achieve your goal of improved vision, it is important that you have a good space in which to work. That space should be quiet and private and should have good lighting.

#### **GETTING READY**

Integrate these essential components into your vision improvement program:

**BREATHE** As in yoga, good breathing technique is essential to getting the most out of your exercises. As you look around your world, become aware of when you are holding your breath. Breathing regularly will bring more oxygen to your eyes and reduce stress on your vision.

**BLINK** Remembering to blink will prevent you from staring and working too hard as you do your exercises. Blinking will also soothe and moisturize your eyes.

**SMILE** Adding a smile to your exercises will help reduce any tension you might be holding in your eyes. So, smile through this practice and as you go through life.

**HAVE FUN** These exercises should be something you enjoy doing rather than a task you have to get through. These practices are for you, so enjoy yourself.

**COMMIT** As with anything you really want in life, it is important to commit yourself to your goals; in this case, to the goal of improved vision. If you don't think it's the right time for you to make this promise to yourself to work toward improving your vision, then it might be best to delay starting this program for a little while.

**BELIEVE** "Believe and you will conceive." Check in with your belief systems around improving your vision and eye health. Are you supporting yourself with positive thinking? It is possible to improve your vision; make sure you believe this as you begin the program.

## **THE EXERCISES**

In general, each of the exercises that you chose to practice should be done for one to three minutes. For active computer users, try to take a two to three minute break from the screen every hour to do eye exercises. Choose two to three exercises to begin. ("Palming" is a good one to keep doing once per hour.)

### *Exercise # 1: BREATHING*

The way that you breathe is integral to your overall health and is essential to the improvement of your vision. Smooth, deep breathing at an even, rhythmic pace helps us to center the attention on the inner self. Concentrate on the steady inhalation and exhalation of breath. Air is pulled all the way down to the bottom of the lungs. As air fills the lungs, they expand and the stomach pushes

outward. With the exhalation, air is pushed slowly from the bottom of the lungs and the stomach contracts.

Most people breathe very shallowly. Many of us contract our lungs, pulling our stomach in and lifting our shoulders when we inhale and then pushing our bellies out when we exhale. This is actually backwards! When we adopt the proper breathing pattern, this exercise can be very soothing. It can be done anytime, anywhere. At first it might be difficult to breathe in this way, so practice it with patience.

### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 1:***

- When doing this exercise, do not wear glasses or contact lenses if possible.
- Sit on the floor or on a comfortable chair in a quiet room. Alternatively, you can stand in a balanced position with your knees slightly bent.
- Close your eyes gently.
- Notice the rhythm of your breathing.
- Inhale deeply through the nose. Try to let your shoulders remain loose and avoid lifting them. Lungs are like balloons; let them expand as they fill. Imagine that they fill your entire torso, all the way down to your pelvic seat.
- Exhale slowly and evenly through the mouth, pushing the air out from the bottom of your lungs. Feel your stomach and chest flatten but do not squeeze the air out. Let your lungs rest at the end of your exhalation and simply allow your body to begin its next inhalation. Try not to force the next inhalation, but wait for the natural impulse to breathe.
- Repeat the inhalation and the exhalation, letting a natural rhythm flow continuously. Do not overbreathe.
- Concentrate all your attention on the inhalation and exhalation of air. Let thoughts simply evaporate.
- Allow your eyelids to hang heavy until they gently close. Your eyes should be unfocused and the eye muscles relaxed. Let your jaw go slack. Your mouth should be slightly opened. Say the word "Duuuuuh" in order to help your jaw drop.
- Let your body move slightly to prevent muscles from becoming locked.
- Continue breathing consciously for three minutes.
- When you open your eyes, don't look at anything in particular. Let your eyes open without refocusing so that they can momentarily receive light in the most natural and relaxed way.

Practice this breathing technique as often as you wish with and without your glasses or contacts.

### ***Exercise # 2: VISION STATEMENTS***

Your attitudes and belief systems are extremely important to improving your vision. Anatomy and physiology show that the eyes are the tools of the mind. Focusing your mind in the correct way is essential for improving your vision. It is important that you begin your program by declaring your intentions about your vision. The following are some possible statements you may use.

- I can improve my vision.
- My eyesight can get better.
- I can survive without my glasses.
- I am ready to see the world.
- I can see without glasses.
- I am now ready to see better.

These are just some examples of Vision Statements that could work for you. You can create your own or adjust these to your particular vision condition.

### *Exercise # 3: PALMING*

This exercise is done without any glasses or contact lenses. Palming helps to reduce stress around the eyes. When you place your palms around your eyes you are stimulating very powerful acupuncture points that help to calm the mind, relax the muscles surrounding the eyes, and bring healing energy to the eyes (through increased circulation).

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 3:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- Sit at a flat table. Lean forward, place your elbows on the table, and close your eyes gently. Avoid placing stress on your neck by ensuring that your elbows are at a proper angle and your arms are bearing the weight of your head.
- Now, place the palm of your left hand over your left eye with your fingers on your forehead, and the hollow of your palm directly over the eye, but not touching it. Be sure there is enough room to blink. The heel of your hand rests on the cheekbones.
- Then place your right hand over your right eye with the fingers crossing over the fingers of the left hand. The right palm should be placed over the eye and the heel of the hand should rest on the cheekbones in the same manner as the left.
- With palming you are giving your eyes a break from the constant effort of seeing, and you can just focus on relaxing your mind and eyes simultaneously. Even though we recommend that you do this for only three minutes, palming can be done for as little or as much as you like throughout the day as a way to relax your eyes and relieve the tensions of daily life.

### *Exercise # 4: FIGURE EIGHTS*

This exercise increases the flexibility of your eye muscles in a relaxed way.

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 4:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- You can either stand or sit with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands at your sides. Do not cross your hands. If you're standing, let your knees bend slightly.
- Imagine a horizontal figure eight (the shape of an infinity symbol) approximately ten feet in front of you.
- Allow your eyes to trace along the figure eight without moving your head. First trace in one direction, then in the opposite direction. Always remember to continue to breathe and blink as your eyes move effortlessly along the figure eight. Be aware of any tension you might be holding in your jaw and let it release.

### *Exercise # 5: THE HOT DOG*

This exercise improves the flexibility of the inside muscles of your eyes (called the ciliary muscles). It is important to keep these muscles flexible.

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 5:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- You can either stand or sit with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands at your sides. Do not cross your hands. If you're standing, let your knees bend slightly.
- Focus your eyes on an object in the distance.
- While looking at your distant target, bring your index fingers, tips touching, about eight inches in front of your eyes and into your line of sight.
- Still looking to your distant target, calmly notice a mini "hot dog" has appeared between the tips of your fingers. Remember to continue to breathe easily and deeply. Do not be

distracted by the spectacle of the mini hot dog and do not allow yourself to look directly at this optical illusion. Continue to focus your eyes on the distant target.

- Pull the tips of your fingers apart slightly and observe the hot dog floating in the air.
- Now keep the hot dog for two breaths, then look directly at your fingers and watch the hot dog disappear. Take two breaths before looking back to your distant target and finding the hot dog again. Switch back and forth for two minutes.

### ***Exercise # 6: SCANNING***

Staring is bad for your eyes because it freezes the energy and muscles, restricting the blood flow. The process of scanning is the opposite of staring. Scanning objects in your environment keeps your alive and energetic.

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 6:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- You can stand, sit, or move around your environment.
- As you look at objects, let your eyes glide over them as if you were painting them with your gaze. Continue to breathe deeply and easily.
- As your gaze shifts from object to object allow your eyes to move easily without staring. Don't forget to continue to keep breathing and blinking. Your eyes should move in a relaxed manner without any tension. Make sure to release any stress you might be holding in your mouth or jaw.

### ***Exercise # 7: EFFORTLESS FOCUS***

This exercise will help you to increase awareness of objects that you focus on as well as other objects in your peripheral vision.

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 7:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- Choose a point on which to focus your attention and look at it intense effort. Then, relax your focus and look at the point or object effortlessly. Be aware of the difference in how it feels to look at something with effort and without effort. Notice how your peripheral vision expands when you look with ease.
- This effortless way of seeing should permeate your everyday seeing and allow your vision to expand rather than become increasingly narrow.

### ***Exercise # 8: NEAR AND FAR FOCUS***

This exercise helps to improve the eyes' flexibility as they shift from distance viewing to near visual focus.

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 8:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- You can either stand or sit with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands at your sides. Do not cross your hands. If you're standing, let your knees bend slightly.
- Hold your thumb six inches away from your eyes, directly in front of your nose.
- Gaze easily at your thumb and take a deep breath. Next, focus on a distant object at least ten feet away and take a deep breath. Change your focus the every breath. Feel the change in your eye muscles as you shift your focus.

### **Exercise # 9: EYE MASSAGE**

Throughout China, eye exercises are done in schools, offices, and factories. By taking regular breaks for eye exercises, many people are able to avoid the need for glasses. These massage exercises are primarily concerned with relaxing the eye muscles. You will be using finger massage to stimulate what are known as "acupressure points."

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 9:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- Sit quietly and relax, feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Close your eyes gently.
- When you press each point, be gentle. Don't use too much force and be sure to avoid putting pressure on the eyeballs.
- Place your thumbs on the spot between eyebrows and the inside corners of your eyes and place your other fingers on your forehead. Press your thumbs into this point for four breaths.
- Use the thumb and index finger of one hand to massage the bridge of your nose. Press the point and then squeeze with an upward motion. Press and squeeze four times for four breaths.
- Place your middle fingers on your cheekbones, directly below the center of each eye. Massage this point for four breaths.
- Massage the point starting at your temples right below the eyebrows and level with the outside corner of your eyes. Then place your thumbs on the inside end of the eyebrows and massage. Move to the middle of the eyebrow and massage. Then massage the end of the eyebrow. Lastly, massage right below the middle of your eye.

These exercises can either be performed in order as described above or done separately. You can either dedicate a specific time to practice them or incorporate a few of them into your daily life activities.

### **Exercise # 10: ZOOMING**

This exercise is designed to improve the flexibility of your eye muscles.

#### ***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 10:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- Extend your arm all the way out in front of you in line with the center of your body and hold up your thumb.
- As you breathe in, move your thumb slowly towards you as you continuously focus your eyes on it.
- When your thumb is within three inches of your face, move your arm away and begin again.

### **Exercise # 11: SUNNING**

The eyes are light-sensing organs that are designed to receive and interpret light energy. Eyes need good, natural light in order to stay healthy and vibrant. Even though we have heard that the depletion of the ozone layer means that we should protect ourselves from ultra-violet radiation, it is still important to allow the eyes to receive natural sunlight at least 20 minutes per day. (Full-

spectrum lights can be used if it is not possible to experience natural light.) This exercise is done without wearing glasses or contact lenses.

***INSTRUCTIONS for Exercise # 11:***

- Remember to breathe. Take two deep breaths to begin.
- Sit or stand in full sunlight or under a full spectrum light source.
- Close your eyes gently and keep them closed throughout the exercise.
- Move your head slowly from side to side so that you move from shade to full sun.  
Remember to continue to breathe easily and deeply. Feel the light on your eyelids; visualize accepting the light energy.
- Alternate between five breaths of Sunning and two breaths of Palming.



# ACUPRESSURE MASSAGE FOR THE EYES

## ACUPRESSURE EXERCISES FOR BETTER EYE HEALTH

Acupuncture/acupressure is an ancient system of healing developed over thousands of years as part of the traditional medicine of China, Japan, and other countries in East Asia.

The practice is rooted in the discovery of the meridian system, the channels of energy that run throughout the body. Stimulation of specific areas on the skin affects the functioning of certain organs of the body. Centuries of practical experience show that when energy is flowing smoothly throughout the body one enjoys health, while blockages in any of these energy currents results in pain and disease.

## MAJOR ACUPRESSURE EYE POINTS

There are a number of acupuncture/acupressure points around the eyes (around the orbits or the bones that surround the eyeballs). The points described below are some of the major local eye points.

**Jingming (Bl-1) Urinary Bladder Channel** is located at the inner corners of the eyes beside the nose. Bladder 1 and 2 are perhaps the best two points for eye problems of all kinds including early-stage cataracts and glaucoma as well as hysteria accompanied by vision loss. They are also used for problems with conjunctivitis due to Wind Heat and Liver Heat, and can be helpful for the elderly who may suffer from blurred vision due to Deficient Jing and Blood.

**Zanzhu (Bl-2) Urinary Bladder Channel** is located in the depressions at the inner edges of the eyebrows directly above Bl-1. See Bladder 1 for its correspondences.

**Yuyao** is located in the hollow at the midpoint of the eyebrow. Stimulating these points will help alleviate eye problems related to worry, excessive study, and mental strain.

**Sizhukong (T.B. 23) Sanjiao or Triple Burner Channel** is located in the depression at the outside tip of the eyebrow. Stimulating these points can help alleviate eye and facial problems, whether due to Wind invasion or the Liver Yang and Fire.

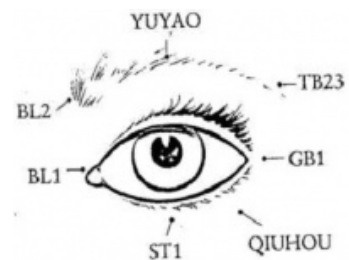
**Tongziliao (G.B. 1) Gall Bladder Channel** is located in cavities on the outside corners of the eye sockets. Stimulating these points can help if you suffer from conjunctivitis; red sore eyes; photophobia; dry, itchy eyes; early-stage cataracts; or blurred vision. They can also be helpful if you suffer from lateral headaches.

**Qiuhou** is located midway between GB-1 and St-1 (see below) along the orbit of the eyes.

**Chengqi (St.1)** is located directly below the pupil on the infraorbital ridge bone. These points are the main points for all eye problems, including those due to Wind Cold, Wind Heat and Hyperactive Liver Yang.

## Instructions for performing self-acupressure for eye health:

**GENTLY** massage each acupuncture point around the orbit of the eye, starting with BL-1 and moving up and outward. Each point should be massaged for approximately 5-10 seconds. You can massage both eyes at the same time. You can do this massage as often as you like over the course of the day. You may find that some points are more sensitive than others.



Keep **BREATHING** as you massage. Deep breathing helps the cells of your eyes receive the oxygen they need for healing. Practice long, slow abdominal breathing while massaging the acupuncture points.

CAUTION: If you are pregnant, consult a trained acupuncturist before treating yourself. Do not massage on an area if it has a scar, burn or infection.

## SELF-HELP

Since we consider most eye conditions to be a reflection of the health of the whole body, lifestyle choices and diet can play a major factor in attaining and maintaining good vision. Below are some recommendations:

**The Vision Diet** Follow this diet as recommended in *Natural Eye Care*, co-authored by Marc Grossman, O.D., L.Ac. Studies show that patients can reduce their eye pressure (called intraocular pressure) by five to seven millimeters with an improved diet and supplement program. In general, a diet high in beta-carotene, vitamins C and E, and sulfur-bearing amino acids is recommended. Foods containing those nutrients include garlic, onions, beans, spinach, celery, turnips, yellow and orange vegetables, green leafy vegetables, seaweed, apples, oranges, and tomatoes.

**Daily Juicing** Consume a minimum of one pint per day of organic fruits and vegetables if possible. Take up to two to eight pints of juice per day for healing. The vegetables used should be mostly greens.

**Drink lots of water** Consume eight to ten glasses of purified water. Avoid carbonated, caffeinated, and alcoholic beverages that can actually dehydrate your eyes.

**Manage your stress** Meditate, take a walk in nature, practice yoga or tai chi, engage in visualization techniques or prayer on a daily basis - or take up any activity that helps you relax. The stress in our lives can impact the health of the eyes. For example, some consider glaucoma to be a stress-related condition.

**Exercise daily** Do at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise daily. Walking and swimming are two excellent forms of exercise.

**Eye exercises** A regular practice can help to bring energy and blood to the eyes, thereby helping to drain away toxins or congestion from the eyes.

**Eye Exercise CDs, Videos, DVD** There are a variety of programs available to you in our store. See the NaturalEyeCare.com store's CDs/DVDs/Videos Category for a complete listing.

**Avoid food allergens** A study of 113 patients with chronic simple glaucoma showed immediate IOP increases of up to 20 millimeters when they were exposed to foods in to which they were allergic.

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