



PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS WEEK & WORLD HEALTH DAY EYE CARE THROUGH YOGA



*"The fastest way to bring the mind into concentration is through the eyes"
-Swami Sitaramananda*

It is said that "the face is the index of the mind and the eyes are the windows of the soul." On a tangible level, eyes are our only windows to the world.

Our eyes are often called the windows to our soul. The only time this organ gets rest is when we sleep. We work our eye muscles all the time, yet fail to exercise them. **Yoga helps to strengthen vision, relax and tone eye muscles and alleviate stress.**

We spend most part of our day in front of the computer screen, staring at word documents, excel sheets or Youtube videos. And all this while, we worry about our expanding waistline, our dull skin and drying hair. We worry that our stomach isn't flat enough, our legs aren't toned enough and our gluts aren't firm enough. But in the process, we forget about one of the most important parts of our body, the eyes. The ones that itch from sheer exhaustion and burn tirelessly after the end of a really long day.

You might not feel the need to exercise your eyes because well, there aren't any immediate symptoms or signs of weak or tired eyes but if you want to guard yourself from hazy spots and blurry vision in the future, then we suggest you exercise them as often as possible. One of the best ways to do so is to try yoga exercises for eyes. Yoga for eyes is a certain type of eye workout that can be done at any given time of the day; all you need are a few minutes.

There are six muscles that connect the eye to the eye socket and help them move side to side, up and down and all around. When you read, drive or watch something over an

extended period of time, it drains your eye muscles of flexibility and tires them out. This condition is known as eye fatigue and is only worsened by smart phones and computer devices. While eye fatigue isn't a very serious condition, if it persists overtime it can be. **The one way to help relieve the symptoms of eye fatigue (burning, itching and tiredness) is eye yoga.** Why yoga you ask? Yoga is a form of exercise designed to work on your health and consciousness i.e your mind, body and soul. So all the exercises help not just your vision but also your brain, reinforcing the fact that everything is connected. Eye yoga can also relieve you from disorders related to defects in the eye muscles like myopia and hypermetropia.

"Since the eye muscles are eight times stronger than they need to be, they don't have to be strengthened so much as stretched, relaxed and fine-tuned. You will need to balance the eye stretching and strengthening exercises, where the eyes learn to work and see together, with the relaxing, loosening exercises, where you re-pattern your eyes and brain to relax and see."

Yoga is an old discipline from India. It is both spiritual and physical. Yoga uses breathing techniques, exercise and meditation. It claims to improve health and happiness.

Yoga is the Sanskrit word for *union*.

Many of the yogic exercises are aimed at improving the functioning of specific organs of the body. Yoga provides a series of eye exercises that improves the functioning of the eyes and helps to overcome various eye-related problems such as short sightedness and long sightedness.

Did you know?

Therapeutic yoga techniques include exercises such as:

- Palming
- Blinking
- Changing focus of eyes from side to side
- Changing focus of eyes forward and sideways
- Rotational viewing
- Viewing upwards and down.
- Preliminary nose tip gazing
- Near and distant viewing

Regular practice of these yoga eye exercises helps to relax eyesight and facilitate the normal functioning of our eyes.

Note: Before starting these exercises, it is always recommended to splash your eyes with cold water a few times. Remember to keep the head and spine straight throughout the exercises.

Other than a few diseases such as cataract and glaucoma many eye disorders are related to the malfunctioning of the ocular muscles caused by chronic mental and emotional tensions. Yoga techniques for the eyes help to improve various disorders related to defects in the eye muscles such as myopia and hypermetropia.

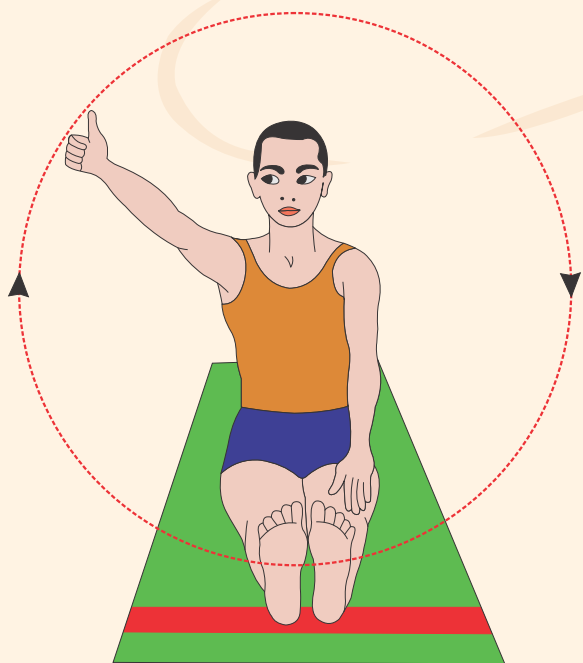
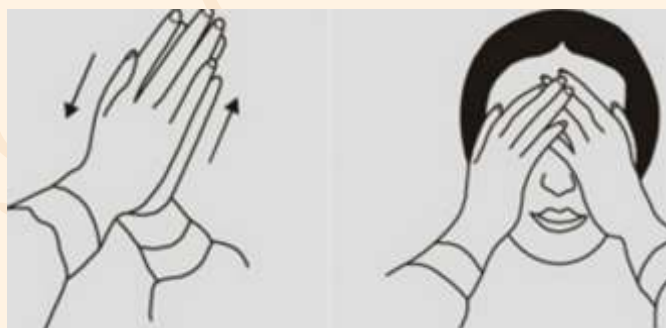
Just blink - yoga exercises for your eyes

Some of the yoga exercises are as simple as blinking, yet it is something so powerful. We forget to blink when browsing long hours on our mobile phone /computer/ laptop. Blinking and other simple exercises for the eyes make them healthier and stronger and just take a few minutes.

PALMING:

Sit quietly with eyes closed and take some deep breaths to relax yourself completely.

- Rub the palms of your hands vigorously, until they become warm and place the palms gently over your eye lids.
- Feel the warmth of the palms being transferred onto the eyes and the eye muscles relaxing. Your eyes are being bathed in soothing darkness.
- Stay in this position until the heat from the hands has been completely absorbed by the eyes.
- Keeping the eyes closed, lower the hands.
- Once again rub the palms and repeat the process at least three times.



ROTATIONAL VIEWING:

Sit with legs straight in front of your body.

- Place the left hand on the left knee.
- Hold the right fist above the right knee, with the thumb pointing upwards. Keep the elbow straight.
- Now keeping the head still, focus your eyes on the thumb.
- Make a circle with the thumb, keeping the elbow straight.
- Repeat this exercise five times each in clockwise and anti-clockwise direction.
- Repeat the process with the left thumb.
- Close and rest the eyes and relax completely.

Observe the following breathing pattern during this exercise:-

- Inhale while completing the upper arc of the circle.
- Exhale while completing the lower arc.

UP AND DOWN VIEWING:

Sit with legs straight in front of your body.

- With both the thumbs pointing upwards, place both the fists on the knees.
- Slowly raise the right thumb keeping the arms straight. Follow the motion of the thumb upwards with the eyes.
- When the thumb is raised to the

maximum, gradually bring it down to the starting position and continue to keep the eyes focused on the thumb all the while keeping the head still.

- Repeat the same process with the left thumb.
- Practice this 5 times with each thumb.
- The head and the spine should be kept straight throughout.
- Close the eyes and relax.



Observe the following breathing pattern as you perform the above exercise:-

- Inhale while raising the eyes.
- Exhale while lowering the eyes.

SIDEWAYS VIEWING:



Sit with legs straight in front of the body.

- Now lift the arms keeping your fist closed and your thumbs pointing upward.
- Look at a point straight in front of you in level with your eyes.
- Keep the head in this fixed position, focus on the following one after the other, by shifting your vision to the:-
 - Space between the eyebrows
 - Left thumb

- Space between the eyebrows
Right thumb

- Space between the eyebrows
Left thumb

- Repeat this exercise 10 to 20 times.
- After completing this exercise close your eyes and rest.

Observe the following breathing pattern as you perform the above exercise:-

- Inhale in the neutral position
- Exhale while looking to the side.
- Inhale and come back to the center.

BLINKING:



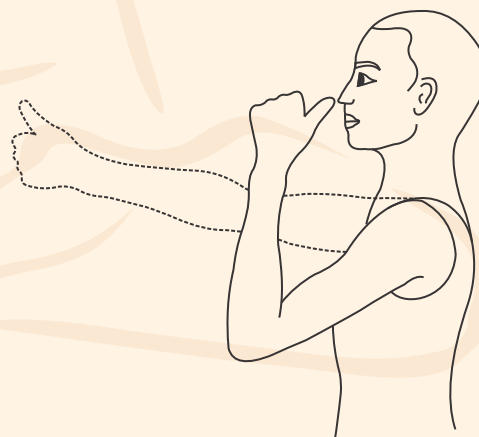
Sit comfortably with your eyes open.

- Blink around 10 times very quickly.
- Close your eyes and relax for 20 seconds. Slowly take your attention to your breath.
- Repeat this exercise about 5 times.

PRELIMINARY NOSE TIP GAZING:

Sit in a cross-legged pose.

- Lift the right arm straight directly in front of the nose.
- Making a fist with the right hand, keep your thumb pointing upward.
- Focus both eyes on the tip of the thumb.
- Now bend the arm and gradually bring the thumb to the tip of the nose, all the while having the eyes focused on the tip of the thumb.
- Remain in this position for a while with the thumb held at the tip of the nose with the eyes focused there.
- Continuing to gaze at the tip of the thumb, gradually straighten the arm.
- This constitutes a single round.
- Perform at least five such rounds.



Observe the following breathing pattern as you perform the above exercise:-

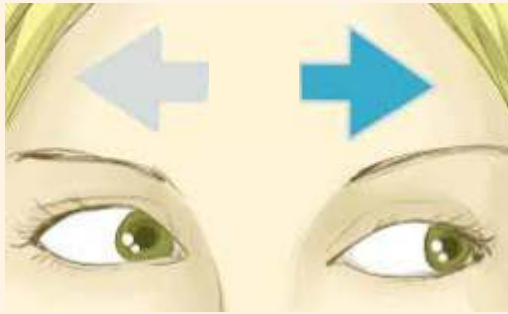
- Breathe in while the thumb is pulled to the tip of the nose.
- Retain inside while holding the thumb at the tip of the nose.
- Breathe out as the arm is straightened.

FRONT AND SIDEWAYS

VIEWING:

Sit with legs straight in front of the body.

- Then place the left [closed] fist on the left knee ensuring that the thumb points upwards.
- Look at a point straight in front and in level with your eyes.



- Keeping the head in this fixed position.
- Breathing out, focus your eyes on the left thumb.
- Breathing in, focus your eyes at a point in front and in level with your eyes.
- Repeat the same process with the right thumb.
- Then close your eyes and rest.

NEAR AND DISTANT VIEWING:

Stand or sit by an open window with a clear view of the horizon. Keep the arms by your side.

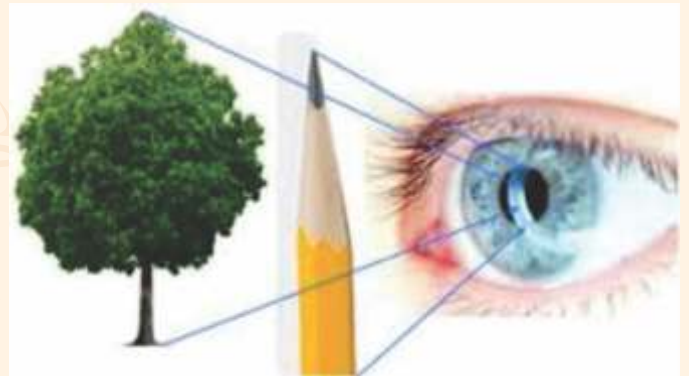
- Focus on the tip of the nose for 5-10 seconds.
- Repeat this for about 10 to 20 times.
- Close and relax the eyes.

Observe the following breathing pattern as you perform the above exercise:-

- Inhale during close viewing.
- Exhale during distant viewing.

After completing all the above exercises, lie in shavasan (corpse pose) for a few minutes and relax yourself completely. Breathe gently and normally, and do not resist any thoughts or sensations during the exercise.

In the present day world about 35 % of the population suffers from myopia and hypermetropia in varying degrees. These disorders are usually overcome using powerful



glasses and lenses which correct the refractive errors of the eye. However one needs to understand that glasses never cure bad eyesight. Therefore, one should use glasses when necessary.

Yoga practice helps develop the body and mind bringing a lot of health benefits yet is not a substitute for medicine. It is important to learn and practice yoga postures under the supervision of a trained Yoga teacher.



R.P. Centre, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

ASSOCIATE: NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS-INDIA, NSPB-INDIA

Tel.: 011-26588812 www.nspb.in • sightforall@nspb.in