

BACKGROUND

- "Eyes are the window to the mind". A pair of sparkling eyes is the most beautiful and attractive features in a person. One need not emphasize the importance of the eyes. Eyes importance has been accorded to their protection.
- Ayurveda has identified three important factors being responsible for the causation of all types of diseases which include Ophthalmic problems too :
 1. Incompatible contact of sense organs (eyes) with their respective sensations (*Asatmya indriyatha samyoga*).
 2. Misuse of intellect (*Pragnyaparadha*)
 3. Abnormal cycles of seasons (*Rituviparyaya*)
- To overcome these three factors, ancient medical scholars prescribed specific diet (*Ahara*), drugs (*Oushadha*) and practices (*Vihara*). Out of these three, *Vihara* or practices play a central role in the prevention and cure of eye diseases.
- Practices advised for the protection of the eyes such as *Padabhyanga* (massage of feet), *Sitalodaka upachara* (cold water applications) are mentioned in various texts of Ayurveda. Solar therapy (*Suryopasana*) found in Netropanishad resembles therapeutic principles of yoga and naturopathy.
- It would be observed that the contemporary yoga movements supported its philosophical values and got shrouded with art of physical culture. This phase is characterised by rapid movement of *Hathayoga* which includes adaptation of *yogasanas*, and *Pranayama* procedures to protect the eyes from different affections.
- In the present times new eye diseases have become a major threat to the mankind and hence significance of multi-disciplinary approach becomes mandatory. Integration of concepts of Ayurvedic preventive ophthalmology, principles of yoga and naturopathy and traditional practices of eye exercises are essential to tackle eye problems.

A. EYE EXERCISES

For correction of refractive errors and the cure for other eye diseases the following exercises are advisable. All exercises should preferably be performed twice daily, i.e., morning and evening.

1. Sunning

The eye is exposed to sun for a period of 5 minutes daily. First, apply the sun drops made with *garlic juice* and honey with a glass rod in each eye, after that sit facing the sun with eyes closed and chin raised, then sway your body from side to side like a pendulum for 5 minutes.

2. Eye Wash

After sunning, come to shade and rinse your eyes by blinking about 20 times in to weak solution of *Triphala Kashaya* using a pair of eye cups filled to muscles and the surrounding tissues.

3. Palming

Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and covered by palms (the fingers being crossed upon the forehead). Elbows should rest on a cushion in such a way so as to avoid pressure on the eye ball. Perfectly black field is experienced before the eyes. Improvement in eyesight and feeling of relaxation and relief of pain and sense of coolness in the head can be experienced. This exercise can be practised several times during the day. Morning is best suited. Fatigue, noise hunger, anger, worry or depression are conditions which make palming difficult.

While palming take deep breathing It improves the accuracy and sensitiveness of eyes, nerves and mind. Have deep breathing and keep the mouth closed. See that more time is taken for exhalation than inhalation and continue the exercise till you complete one hundred respiration.

4. Swinging/Shifting

Moving the eyes from one side to another is called shifting. Stationary objects appear to move in the direction opposite to the movement of the head and eyes. For example, when you travel in a fast moving train, telephone poles and other objects (though stationary) appear to move in the opposite direction.

The eyes gets rest only when it is moving. Shifting can be practised both either with eyes open or closed.

Stand one feet apart in front of a board with vertical bar like structures, and move your body from right to left or vice versa 50 to 100 times. Keep eye and the sight shifting along with the movement of your head and blink at each end. Observe that the bars appears to move in the opposite direction.

The right way to swing is to move the eyes from one point to another slowly, regularly, continuously, restfully, easily without effort and without trying to see any other object. Do not stare at objects and make no effort to fix your sight at them. Lazily shift your sight from one point to another without having any idea that you are seeing the object. Blink once on each side Move your head, eyes and body rhythmically from side to side.

5. Candle Flame

Sit Facing the candle flame about one feet apart and gently move the body forward and backward with the rhythm of respiration Continue the exercise till you complete 25 to 100 respiration.

6. Candle Light Reading

Fine point reading is beneficial to the eye. It saves the eyes from cataract, glaucoma or other old age diseases of the eyes. Shift the sight on while line of fine point and blink at the end each line. Read the print in good light and candle light alternatively without glasses with each eye separately. The book is held at a distance from which it could be seen best. The patient should not look directly at the letters but just at the white spaces between the lines of print and imagine that they are perfectly white. Move the head a little from side and blink often.

7. Playing with the Ball

Toss the ball to the ground and observe the bouncing ball moving your sight and head at the same time. Increase the speed of the ball and continue the exercise for about 50 to 100 times. After this toss the ball from one hand to another hand and move your head and the eyes along with the ball, and blink when you catch the ball. Repeat it for 50 to 100 times.

8. Vapourisation

Put two or three drops of eucalyptus oil or crystals of menthol in boiling water and by covering your head allow the vapour to strike on your face and keep blinking for sometime till you perspire.

9. Cold Pads

Wipe out the perspiration and put cotton pads, soaked in cold water and squeeze, on your closed eyes and relax for 10 minutes.

Tirphala Kasaya Preparation :

Wipe one cup of water and ¼ teaspoonful of *Triphala* powder. Boil the water and filter it, when it is lukewarm. Fill up the eye cups and wash the eyes. Fresh *Kashaya* should be prepared for each application.

B. GENERAL REGIMEN TO PREVENT EYE DISEASES

Those who wish to have prolonged healthy vision, should keep the value of practices and daily regimes prescribed by ancient scholars. Some of them are as follows :

- **Massage of feet (*Padabhyanga*):** Regular massage of feet with gingel oil will ensure clear eyesight and prevention of eye diseases.
- **Cold water application :** (*Sitalodaka upachara*)
 1. ***Sheetambuprativasana* :** Keeping mouthful of cold water 2 to 4 times a day will keep good eyesight and ensure good vision.
 2. ***Sheetodaka sechana* :** Instillation of few drops of cold water into the eyes 3 to 4 times a day is beneficial for vision.
 3. ***Panitala sparsha* :** Keeping the wet palms over eyes, washing hands after each meal, prevents refractive errors, cataract etc.
 4. ***Sheetodaka shira snana* :** One Should use warm water for bath. Hot water if used if used daily on the head, it lessens the eyesight.

C. AVOID HARMFUL PRACTICES LIKE....

- Excessive consumption of alcohol.
- Chewing of betel leaf with tobacco
- Day sleep

D. RECOMMENDED YOGIC THERAPIES

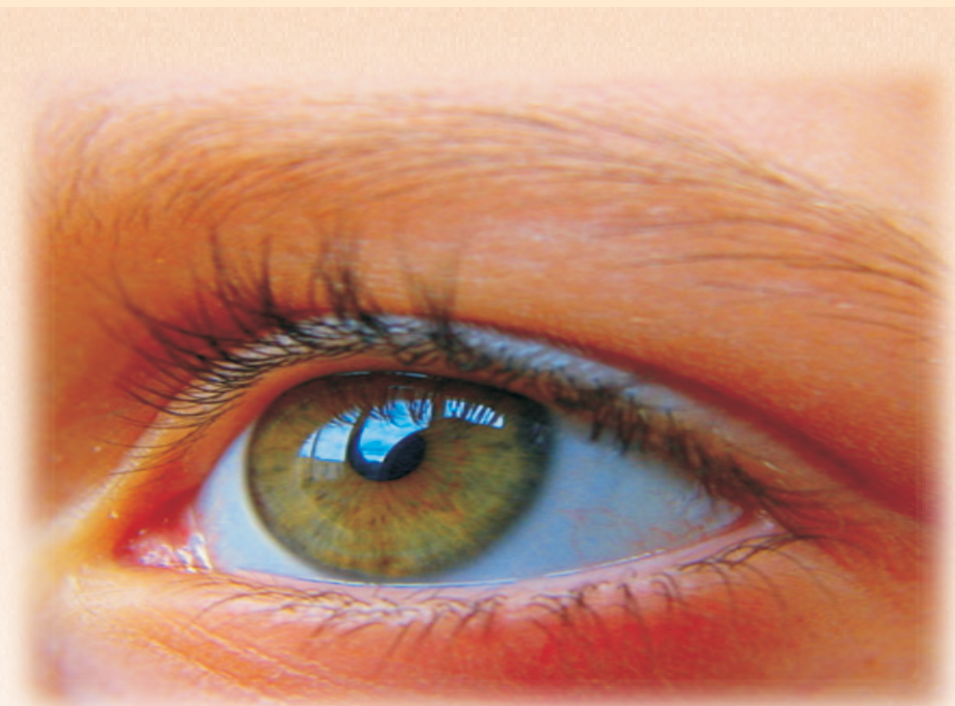
- ***Matsyasana* :** This posture is extremely useful for eyesight. It prevents all complaints of eye.
- ***Trataka* :** Sit in lotus posture and concentrate your sight in a minute object without blinking as more time as possible. This cures all eye diseases.

Further information can be obtained from :

Director General
Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences
No. 61-65, Institutional Area, Opp. 'D'-Block, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058
Telephone : +91-11-28525520/28524457, Fax : +91-11-28520748
E-mail : dg-ccras@nic.in
Website : www.ccras.nic.in
www.indianmedicine.nic.in

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EYE CARE Through Ayurveda



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