

SELF-CARE FOR EYES: EXERCISES

by Agnieszka Łukasik

1) Palming

Sit comfortably, with a straight back, rest your elbows on a table so you can cover your eyes with palms of hands. Before you cover your eyes, rub hands together, so they're warm, then shake them briefly to relax the wrists. Cup your hands and cover the eyes - the trick is to do it lightly, so there's no pressure on the/around the eyeballs. Also there should be no light penetrating through it. It's good to do this exercise in a darkened room if you have the possibility. When doing this exercise, make sure your back and arms are relaxed too.

It's good to breath using 7/11 technique (breath in in a count of 7 and out for a count of 11 - the important part is breathing out longer than you breathe in). You can imagine the colour black or dark navy or even some favourite view which brings nice memories. Keep the palms of your hands up as long as you need. If you want to end it, slowly take your hands away first and then open your eyes the same way, breathing calmly all the time. If you wish, play some quiet relaxing music.

2) Tracking finger

You'll need some small object; colourful paperclips are perfect, and pens are also good. Sit comfortably, covering one eye with the palm of hand. Hold a paperclip between the index finger and thumb. Place it close to your uncovered eye, but far enough that you can focus your sight on it. Then slowly, having your eyesight focused on the object all the time, pull your hand forward as much as you can. Then, with a fluid motion, pull your hand near your eye again. You can do it faster, but slow enough for your eyesight to stay focused on the paperclip or other object of your choice. Repeat 15 times or so and then change the eye. Repeat the procedure a few times and end it with the palming exercise. There's also another version of this exercise, which you can do while waiting for a bus to go home. Instead of tracking the paperclip with your eyes, follow the cars as they come closer to you or further from you.

3) Blinking

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Do it gently, the upper and lower eyelid should softly touch each other - be sure not to shut them tight. The rest of the face should not move at all during this exercise. Open your eyes every 3-5 seconds. Repeat 15 times or so. Then place fingertips on temples of your head and flutter eyelids about 10 times, do it as fast and gentle as you can. If you can't feel any movement below your fingertips, you're doing it right. Close your eyes gently and stay like this for some time, breathing deeply. Repeat all the blinking exercise procedure two times for the best effect.

4) Sunning

This version has almost nothing to do with Dr Bates' original idea. Certainly I won't recommend gazing directly at the sun or won't argue that it will somehow cure myopia, cause it won't will not. But it's a nice activity when the sun is out and you feel you're getting tired looking at computer screen. It requires lying or sitting in a sunspot with your eyes closed. Turn your head towards the sun and stay like that for couple of minutes. Be sure to relax as much as you can, 7/11 breath technique will help you to do so. If the sunlight is too harsh at first and you have to squint your eyes, even if your eyelids are closed, tilt your head a little from the direct sunlight. Let your eyes get accustomed. The point of this activity is to relax your face muscles and the warmth of the sun is perfect for this. Be sure to apply sunscreen first, if it's summer and your skin is sensitive! I also noticed that after this exercise staring at a shiny computer screen is less unpleasant for the eyes.

5) Face massage

A long day of working at a computer sometimes results with a headache and this massage will help you relax your facial muscles and lessen the pain. Often people tend to squeeze the area just above the corners of eyes when their head hurts. This area is one of the crucial points which are shown on

the picture below. To do the massage, sit in a comfortable position, it could be the one mentioned in the exercise above. Close your eyes and start pressing points firmly or tapping them and massaging as long as you need, using your fingers. At the end of the massage, for a better effect, you can do the palming exercise.



Other basics

- Every now and then look away from the computer screen and focus sight at the most faraway object you can find. Preferably, out of window with a view on some greenery or through the long corridor. Then look at some other objects which are in closer and closer proximity to you. Don't forget to blink when doing so.
- Every hour or so, do a 5-15 min break. You can do one of the exercises described below if you feel you need to.
- If you work in air-conditioned place and your eyes tend to get really dry, equip yourself with artificial tears eye drops.
- Eliminate the source of light which casts reflection on the monitor. The standing lamplight shining up is the best. The light source with adjustable level of light intensity can come handy too.