



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Convergence Weakness Eye Exercise Programme

Information for patients



Orthoptic Department,
Oxford Eye Hospital

This leaflet explains the problems associated with convergence weakness and how it can be helped with a course of eye exercises.

Convergence is the ability to direct both eyes at a near target as it approaches. Good convergence is important for all near tasks (such as computer work) and enables us to read comfortably. If you have convergence weakness you may have symptoms such as:

- blurred vision
- headaches after reading or other close work
- jumbling of print
- double vision for near tasks.

Convergence weakness can be improved by exercises.
There are 3 stages to the exercises.

STAGE 1 – Smooth convergence

- Choose a detailed target (the Orthoptist may have given you a stick for you to attach a small picture or some magazine print). Hold this at eye level in front of you, at arms-length distance.
- The **aim** is to keep the target as one image for as long as possible, as you bring it gradually closer.
- Slowly move the target towards your nose.
- When you see two images this means your convergence has failed and your eyes have stopped working together. You should try hard to join the two images by intensely focusing. When they have become one image again continue bringing the target closer.
- When you are unable to join the images together for a second time, move the target back to arms-length and start again.
- You should aim to be able to keep a target as a single image until it is at a minimum distance of 10cm away from your nose. This is the normal convergence range.
- The Orthoptist may give you a 'Dot Card' to enhance this exercise. They will explain how to use this.

STAGE 2 – Jump convergence

This exercise helps with your ability to change focus from a target near you to a distant target and back again.

When your smooth convergence has improved you need to move to this exercise.

- Start with the near target at about 20cm away from your nose. Look at this target for about 5-6 seconds.
- Then look at a target in the distance for about 2-3 seconds. This target should be about 3 metres away (on the other side of the room or out of a window).
- Then look back to the near target.
- Move the near target gradually closer, until you can change focus from a near distance of around 10cm.

STAGE 3 – Voluntary convergence

This is the final stage of the convergence exercises and it teaches you to 'cross your eyes'! This is to help you to be able to converge your eyes without the aid of a near stimulus (target).

The Orthoptist will guide you on how to do this and may give you one or two 'stereogram' cards to help you master this exercise.

When to do the exercises

You will be advised by the Orthoptist how often to carry out the exercises. 'Little but often' is the best regime; practising 4-6 times a day for 1-2 minutes at a time. If you have forgotten to do the exercises during the day, do not be tempted to 'make up' for this by doing 10-15 minutes of practise in the evening. If you do this you are likely to give yourself a headache and make your eyes feel very uncomfortable.

Remember that, as with any form of new exercise, your eyes may feel more tired or uncomfortable at first. This is because you are using muscles that are not used to working as hard as they should be.

With all the convergence exercises it is important that you relax the eye muscles you have been working at the end of exercising, by closing your eyes or looking into the far distance for a moment or two.

Remembering to do the exercises can be more difficult than the exercises themselves! Try to find ways of reminding yourself, for example, leaving a note on the fridge door or setting aside time to practise them at meal times. The following chart can be used to record when you do your exercises and may help to remind you.

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How to contact us

If you have any problems, please discuss these with the Orthoptist at your next visit, or telephone the Eye Hospital.

Tel: **01865 234 567**

and listen for the option for the Orthoptic Department.
(8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.



Authors: Claire MacIntosh, Orthoptist
Jacqui Greenhalgh, Head of Department
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charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

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