

What is Convergence Insufficiency?

This is when the muscles that pull our eyes inwards towards the nose are weak. Someone with a convergence insufficiency may experience 'tired eyes', headaches or double vision when reading or carrying out work which is close to the face.

What causes a Convergence Insufficiency?

There are several causes of convergence insufficiency, the most typical are:

- Weak inward pulling muscles
- Tiring of the eyes due to long periods of reading/studying
- Ill health
- Ageing
- Whiplash

How is it treated?

Your orthoptist will give you 'eye exercises' to do a few times each day, for short lengths of time. The exercises are designed to strengthen the weak muscles. You should remember to relax the muscles after exercising by looking into the distance for a few minutes. Here are reminders of the instructions for the most common exercises:

- Pen 'push-ups'

Take a pen or pencil and looking at the tip, hold it away from you so that you see just one of it. Now bring it gradually closer to you, pulling your eyes in to keep the tip single. If the tip becomes double, try to pull your eyes in to make it single, if it stays double, move the tip away a little until it is single and try again.

- Dot card

Hold the card at the end of your nose, tipping the card downwards slightly. Keeping both eyes open, look at the dot furthest from you. If the dot is not single, you must pull your eyes inwards to make it so. When you have the single dot, you should see the card like figure.1 below. Next, look at the second furthest dot and as with the first dot make it single, it should look like figure 2. Try to do this as far along the card as you can.

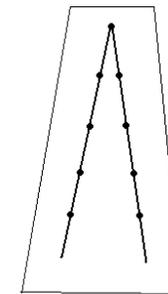


Figure 1

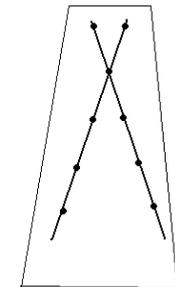


Figure 2

My eyes ache/feel tired after doing the exercises. Is this normal?

Patients may find that their symptoms are a little worse when they first start the exercises. However, the symptoms should begin to improve if the exercises are carried out correctly and the muscles strengthen.

Your orthoptist will see you quite frequently during the treatment to check that the exercises are working for you.

Do exercises really help?

Exercises have been used by orthoptists to treat this condition for almost a century. Extensive research has consistently shown that exercises are very beneficial, if carried out as prescribed¹.

Please contact the orthoptic department if you are having difficulties or if you lose your exercise card.

Orthoptists at
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¹ Aziz et al (2006), *Strabismus*, 14:183-189