What are convergence exercises?

The orthoptic exercises described in this leaflet have been recommended and explained to you by your orthoptist. This leaflet is intended as a home reference to remind you how to undertake each stage of treatment. It is only necessary to do the exercises specifically recommended for you.

Convergence is the ability for the eyes to move inwards together at the same time.

Convergence exercises are used to improve a patient’s ability to converge the eyes equally. This helps to relieve symptoms such as, headaches and intermittent double vision which may occur when reading or looking at close objects.

These exercises should be practised five to six times a day or as recommended by your orthoptist but only for a few minutes at a time. It is important to relax your eyes afterwards by looking into the distance or closing them for a short time.
Pen/spatula convergence

**Equipment:** The orthoptist will provide you with a spatula marked with an appropriate target, but you can use a pen, pencil or even a finger to do this exercise.

The **aim** of the exercise is to move the target towards your nose whilst maintaining a single image. The image may blur but should not split into a double image.

1. Hold the target at arm’s length slightly below eye level, ensuring you can see a single image
2. Bring the spatula slowly and steadily towards your eyes continuously watching the target
3. If the target appears to double, stop moving it, keep your focus on the target and try to regain a single image
4. If a single image is regained, continue to bring the target towards your nose
5. If a single image is not regained, move the target back until a single image is restored and then repeat the exercise from stage 2
6. Good convergence has been achieved if a single image is comfortably maintained whilst bringing the target all the way up to your nose.

Dot card

**Equipment:** The orthoptist will provide you with a dot card.

The **aim** of the exercise is to maintain a single image of the dot you are directly looking at. All other dots and the lines will double up.

1. Hold the card slightly depressed so it is touching the tip of your nose and with the line of dots extending away from you
2. Look at the farthest dot and ensure this appears single. The remainder of the dots and the line then appear double forming an A shape
3. Now look to the second furthest dot, ensure it is single before moving onto the next. Continue slowly up the card ensuring each dot you are focusing on is single.

4. If you are unable to get the dot you are looking at to appear as a single dot, go back to point 3 and try again.

5. You will notice all dots before and after double and the line will look like an X.

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  X
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6. Continue up the card. When you maintain focus on the nearest dot this will be single and the remainder of the dots and the line then appear double forming a V shape.

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7. Now slowly change your focus, retracing your steps back down the line of dots to the start position.

8. Once you can achieve smooth convergence up and down the card the orthoptist may ask you to jump from the end dot, to a middle dot, to the nearest dot and back to the end.

**Stereograms**

**Equipment:** The orthoptist will provide you with the relevant stereogram card.

**Near position stereogram**

The aim of the exercise is to achieve a central complete image by focusing on a point in front of the card and being aware of, but not directly looking at, the images on the stereogram card.
1. Hold the card at arm’s length and place a pen immediately in front of the card centrally between the images.

2. Looking at the pen, bring it slowly towards your eyes. At the same time, be aware of the images on the card but do not look directly at the card.

3. As you move the pen towards your nose the images on the card begin to double up i.e. the two cats become four.

4. With the pen at a point about half way between your eyes and the card the ‘two’ central cats should join to form one complete cat. It is very tempting to look directly at the card but focus must be kept on the pen if you are to achieve three cats.

5. If using the bucket or ring card the central image becomes three dimensional.

6. Once three images are achieved, try to make the middle image as clear as possible.

7. If you can maintain the three images you can slowly remove the pen whilst keeping your eyes converged on the point where the pen has been.

8. A step further is to repeat the exercise by looking at an imaginary point half way between your eyes and the card so that the third image is achieved by voluntary convergence.
Distance position stereogram

Relaxation of the eyes may be achieved by holding the card at arm’s length whilst focusing on a target in the distance. The upper border of the card should be just underneath the distance target. As you focus on the distance target the cats will begin to double and then as your convergence relaxes further these two images will join to create a complete third cat (or if using the bucket or ring card the central image becomes three dimensional).

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