


# the eyes have it

BY SHANNON SEXTON

**Our eyes** filter and absorb an endless stream of visual stimuli day after day. We often take them for granted, but when we strain them the pain can be acute.

According to ayurveda, the eyes are a seat of the *pitta dosha* (the fire principle), and most eye problems result from a pitta imbalance. If you have pitta-type eyes (medium in size; either light blue, light gray, light green, or hazel in color; and characterized by an intense luster), your chances for eye irritation and strain are higher than people who don't. And if you're around 40, you're also more susceptible to eye problems because *alochaka pitta* (a subtype of pitta that governs vision) tends to decrease at that time. Stress, overwork, anger, anxiety, alcohol, spicy food, pollution, and bright, direct sunlight will also increase your risk for eye irritation.



"Clear, vibrant eyes are a sign of good health."

—Pratima Raichur,  
*Ayurvedic Beauty Care*

## the #1 eye remedy

According to ayurveda, the mind and vision are intertwined. As Pratima Raichur writes in *Ayurvedic Beauty Care*, "When the mind is tired or strained, nothing can rest the eyes; and when the mind is at rest, nothing can tire the eyes." Meditation and relaxation exercises are the #1 remedies for eye irritation.

Here are some other ways to relieve common eye problems and put the sparkle back into your eyes.

## massage

One of ayurveda's most effective remedies for eyestrain and for burning eyes is massaging the scalp and feet nightly with one teaspoon of castor oil. (If the weather is hot or if you have a pitta imbalance, use brahmi or coconut oil instead.) The oil pulls heat from the eyes and promotes a sound sleep.



### Did you know?

Eyestrain and fatigue are the leading causes of crow's-feet and dark circles under the eyes.



## palming

While sitting comfortably, rub the palms of your hands together rapidly for 10 seconds. (If your eyes are hot or it's summertime, omit this step and instead place thin, wet, cold cotton pads on the palms.) Close your eyes and cup your hands over them, blocking out all light without placing any pressure on the eyeballs. Tilt your head forward and rest your elbows on your knees. Breathing smoothly and deeply, relax in this position for 1 to 10 minutes, up to 5 times per day. If images or light appear in your mind's eye, stay here until you can surrender to the "blackout" without straining. Palming relieves eyestrain and bloodshot eyes.

## 2 eyewashes

For general eye irritation and for burning eyes, try:

**A cool water wash** • Upon rising, fill your mouth with cool water (without swallowing it) and splash cool water over your open eyes. According to Dr. Vasant Lad, "This has a double cooling effect, both from outside and from the oral cavity, that will make your eyes feel fresh, happy, and cheerful."

**Modified netra basti** • Pour warm ghee into the eyecups of your swimming goggles. Then securely place them against the eyes, lie on your back on a flat surface with a towel behind your head, and allow the eyes to roll around in the ghee for about 10 minutes. Return to a sitting position, lean forward, and allow the liquid to drain back into the cups. This treatment improves eyesight and reduces wrinkles.

## nature's nighttime eyedrops

For dry and itchy eyes, put a drop of sesame oil in each eye before sleeping. For irritated eyes, put a drop of pure castor oil (with no preservatives) in each eye. For burning eyes, put a drop of lukewarm liquid ghee or three drops of pure rose water in each eye. ●



### beauty tips from Pratima Raichur

**To prevent lines** • At bedtime, gently massage your closed eyes and the surrounding skin using warm ghee, almond or olive oil, and a few drops of rose or sandalwood essential oil.

**For dark circles under the eyes** • Apply crushed mint leaves around the eyes for 5 to 10 minutes.

**For puffy eyes** • Make eyepads using black-tea bags soaked in warm water. Place on closed eyes for 20 minutes.

**To refresh the eyes** • Close your eyes and put cucumber slices on them or cotton balls soaked in aloe vera, cilantro juice, eyebright, or fennel tea. ●