

Eyes
Forgotten Muscles...
Forgotten Exercises

By
Alan Palmieri

Sometimes I think we lose sight of what bodybuilding really is. I know it means different things to different people, but to me it is far more than a trophy won at a contest. It's more than seeing your picture in a magazine. It's more than having to order tailor made suits. It's the development of the body and mind to their healthiest and fullest potential.

Look at any of the early mail order bodybuilding courses and you'll see a great amount of time and detail spent on such things as digestion and the colon. Organs such as the heart, reproduction glands and in some courses exercises for the eyes would be covered fairly extensively. Why would some courses of instruction contain exercises for the eyes?

Although not a muscle itself, the eyes none the less are held by muscles. The movement of the eyes is controlled by muscles. Just as the biceps are used to pull with the arm, the movement and motion of the eyes are controlled by muscles. It's no surprise the old bodybuilding courses of instructions covered far more aspects of the human body than the current ones do.

I was born cross eyed. Before hitting the age of six I had three operations to correct the condition. Thankfully, my eyes are no longer crossed but I do have a weak eye and have worn glasses all my life. When I was younger I could get by pretty well without them but now, older, I can't see flip without 'em.

I remember as a youngster having to do special exercises to help strengthen my eyes. I've never looked into the names or locations of the muscles involved with the eyes so I'm not even going to make a feeble attempt to list them here and now. I think it's enough to simply state the muscles of the eyes are just like any other muscle of the body and can be developed and strengthened with regular exercise.

When I was a teenager, training intensely, my optometrist made a statement during one of my yearly examines. He said he had been reading about the positive impact lifting weights had on strengthening the eyes. He also said he would like to try some experiments on me to test what the articles were reporting. Unfortunately that never took place but I always remembered what he said. Quite by coincidence, I had an uncle who also had an eye that turned inward. He knew I was very dedicated to my workouts and one day asked if I exercised my eyes. I said I did not and never really gave it a lot of thought.

He explained a series of exercises for the eyes that would help strengthen the muscles. All are performed with the head held stationary looking straight ahead. The first movement is looking up as high as possible, then down. The next movement was to look as far as possible to the right and then the left. The next movement was to roll the eyes in a circle clockwise. The last movement was to rotate the eyes in a circle counterclockwise. These were to be done while standing, sitting or in a lying position. I tried the exercises and performed them in a set / rep scheme just as I would any other exercise. I started out with one set for ten reps and moved up to three sets of twenty reps.

Granted I haven't remained faithful to the eye exercises, working them on a regular basis, over the years and I really can't explain why. I do know this however, even today, if my eyes start bothering me or if I feel they are starting to tire and not focus as normal, I will resume the exercises I just mentioned and they seem to actually help. In fact, if I exercise my eyes as described two or three

times a week they seem to become stronger. I have no scientific proof they do and I have not had any tests run to substantiate this statement. All I know is they feel different, better, and they do function better.

What I can say for a fact, other than just my personal feelings is this: I had my eyes examined for glaucoma and my readings were 19 in one eye and 20 in the other. My optometrist said readings below 21 were desirable and any reading above that would require attention. After exercising my eyes for about eight months the readings came down to 18 in both eyes. Was this favorable reduction due solely to the exercises? Scientifically I don't know, can't answer that, and can't explain it. What I can offer is my personal opinion and that is I feel it was a result of the eye exercises I had been doing. I had no other major changes in my lifestyle.

This brings me back to the importance recognized in early bodybuilding courses, on being aware of the entire body and training the entire body. At some point in time the emphasis shifted from a healthy body to that of a muscular body with the health aspect taking second place, a transition of sorts. Similar to the way bodybuilding and bodybuilders stopped performing feats of strength. There was a time when all bodybuilders were almost required to perform feats of strength. In fact, early on, bodybuilding contests required each contestant to perform feats of strength as part of their presentation.

Bodybuilding is more than sporting and flexing a larger than average arm, at least it should be. Bodybuilding should be the development of the entire body for the purpose of health and strength, self improvement.

www.PalmieriBodybuilding.com

© 2006 Alan Palmieri