Sarvângâsana
(Shoulder Stand)


“A strong upper body equals a stronger Headstand. Use a block and this creative sequence of poses to build strength and stability for your inversions.” (Also discusses shoulder stand.)


“Small, subtle adjustments in form and attitude can make problematic and difficult poses produce their fruits. We will look a little deeper into back bends, shoulderstands, headstands, and related poses. Common difficulties, injuries, and misalignments and their solutions [will be] explored.”


“If you tend to have a flat neck, Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand) can exacerbate the problem. Since the pose drops your chin toward your chest, it makes it very easy to completely flatten the cervical curve or even curve the neck in the wrong direction. If you have a flat neck that doesn’t cause you pain, practicing Shoulderstand in the Iyengar way—using a few folded blankets to support your shoulders and arms while your head is on the floor—allows you to do the pose without flexing your neck so severely. If you have a fairly recent, still painful, and acute neck injury like whiplash from an auto accident, I recommend that you avoid Shoulderstand. It re-creates the position of your injury, and practicing it too soon can significantly prolong your healing time.”


Based on the British Wheel of Yoga Teacher Diploma regulations.
“Master the headstand in five stages, learn postures that help build upper body strength, and understand the subtle power of the shoulderstand, plus the poses that balance and prepare you to receive the full benefits of this posture.”


Abstract: Sarvangasana (SVGN) is a head-down-body-up postural exercise in a “negative g” condition. Though highly recommended as one of the three best of all the asanas it has not yet been studied for its very obvious effects on the cardiovascular (CV) functions. This paper reports the results of the first systematic investigation on SVGN employing echocardiographic analysis in eight healthy male subjects before and after a practice of this asana twice daily for two weeks. The resting heart rate (HR) and left ventricular end-diastolic volume (LVEDV) were significantly reduced (P < 0.02, P < 0.01 respectively) after practicing this asana. A tendency toward a mild regression of the left ventricular mass was noticed, though it was not statistically significant. The CV responses to acute 45 degrees head-down tilt (HDT) in a tilt table was not altered after practicing this asana. Also there was no orthostatic intolerance during the 3-5 min period of 70 degrees head-up tilt (HUT). These results strongly indicate that further studies of this asana performed for a longer period is most likely to yield very significant observations of applied value.


Workshop description: Invoke the stillness of the deep feminine in the Queen of all poses. We will explore the basic pose as well as more advanced variations.


Perry, Kevin. Lighter and younger, the yoga way. 9 Apr 2005. Article available online: http://www.experienceyoga.blogspot.com.

“I have friends who swear by ‘the shoulder stand diet.’ It’s no diet at all. They say that whenever they notice they’ve gained some extra weight, they start practicing shoulder stand (salamba sarvangasana) daily—without fail—and they hold the pose longer than usual. Soon they drop their extra weight . . .”


“. . . Shoulder stand stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system. So when you come out of the pose, if you’re like me, you feel like taking a nap.

“The parasympathetic nervous system slows the heart rate, and increases intestinal and gland activity, etc. (The other part of the autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic nervous system, accelerates heart rate, constricts blood vessels, and raises blood pressure.)

“If you practice shoulder stand in the evenings (not immediately before bed, though), you’ll settle down and relax. I think you’ll fall asleep sooner, reach deep sleep sooner, and stay in deep sleep longer—all of which increase the likelihood that you’ll get a bigger release—that night—of the hormones you need to stay young, add muscle mass, and improve connective tissue resilience . . . and drop fat, too.”


“The quickest way to transform your world is to turn yourself upside down. Any serious yoga practice will do that metaphorically, but actually performing headstand and shoulder stand is a great way to begin the journey.”

___________ Answers the question: “What should you use when practicing Shoulderstand at home without traditional yoga blankets at your disposal?” Yoga Journal, Jan/Feb 2004, p. 36.

Shoulderstand: A yoga pose for the whole body. Bindu, no. 6.


For the shoulderstand plus fish combination, the most pronounced effects were functionally greater chest expansion, and increased breath-holding time and vital capacity. Common general effects of all combinations include lower blood sugar, lower total serum lipids and increased plasma protein.