
**Autonomic changes during the practice of headstand (sirsasana).** Bangalore, India: Vivekananda Kendra Yoga Prakashana, 1996-1997.


“Students who master alignment in Mountain Pose may have trouble maintaining it in Headstand when their world turns upside down. Here are some specific exercises to help your students attain verticality by sensing their alignment from the inside out.”


The editors of *Yoga Journal*. Answer the question: “My question has to do with headstand: When I’m moving out of it, my sacroiliac joints roar with pain. Can you explain this, and perhaps offer a solution?” *Yoga Journal*, May/Jun 2000, p. 58.


“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.”


Abstract: The headstand referred to as sirsas-asana in contemporary yoga literature is indeed not an asana at all. Various classical yoga texts classify the head posture among the mudras giving it a special place. The headstand has a pronounced effect on the glands and generates a much higher rate of bio-energy and deeper changes in the human personality than asanas.

“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.”


Measured the effects of one-half hour of sirsasana, including blood chemicals, heartbeat, blood pressure, and respiration.

Gilmore, Ruth. Answers the question: “I am a Yoga teacher and have a pupil who is afraid to do inversions because she had laser surgery to her eyes a few years ago. She feels pressure on the eyeballs when she is inverted. I used headstand stools for those who cannot do Sirsasana alone and wondered if this gives a stronger ‘rush’ to the head than putting one’s head on the mat where there is a certain amount of counter-pressure. The lady concerned is a dedicated student who would like to perform inverted asanas and seems comfortable doing Adhomukha Svanasana. Is there any danger to the eyes if one inverts after laser or cataract surgery?” Yoga & Health, Oct 2003, p. 37.


This article provides advice on proper alignment in headstand and on preparing properly for doing headstand by first mastering various other poses.


‘To check your habitual neck alignment when you’re doing yoga, sit or stand up tall, lifting your chest, and then check with your hand to see if you have a nice soft curve in your neck. Your chin and gaze should be level. You will notice that if you drop your chin, you look down at the floor. With a normal neck curve, you look straight ahead; if
you were at the beach, you'd be looking at the line between the water and the sky.

"This is the neutral neck alignment you want to take into most of your yoga poses. It’s especially important that you re-create this Tadasana alignment in Sirsasana (Headstand), a pose in which you bear the weight of your body on your neck. If you have a proper cervical curve in Sirsasana, you’ll be looking straight ahead. If your neck is too flat, your weight will shift toward the back of your head and your gaze will be high up on the wall in front of you. This position is quite stressful for the ligaments, muscles, and disks in your neck, and can lead to injury. Because of this danger, it’s a good idea to have an experienced teacher occasionally check your alignment in Headstand."


Jean Gustavson responds to a letter to the editor by Sally-Ann Webb in the Autumn 1997 issue inquiring about what could cause the formation of “little red spots on the eyelids after practicing the headstand or handstand.” Jean writes that they are “petechiae, small haemorrhages caused by an increased postural hydrostatic pressure on the head.” She says that as a nurse she has “seen the whole face covered in petechiae after childbirth due, again, to increased pressure.” She indicates that she knows of no preventative measure other than limiting the time spent in the asana. She does not know if age would be a factor and tends to discount blood pressure, as hers is low and she has experienced petechiae, although she says it could possibly be a contributory cause in some cases.

Headstand. *Bindu*, no. 3.


“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:
The present study had two aims: (1) To assess heart rate variability (HRV) along with non-specific autonomic measures (used in earlier studies), before and after two minutes of the headstand. (2) To compare changes in two categories of subjects, i.e., those who practiced the headstand in a traditional way (without any support) and those who used the support of the wall (a present day adaptation). The subjects were forty male volunteers (age range 19 to 36 years), with twenty subjects under each category. The following changes were significant after the practice, compared to values at baseline. (i) Both categories had an increase in the power of the low frequency component (LF) and a decrease in the high frequency component (HF) of the HRV spectrum, increased LF/HF ratio, and decreased heart rate. (ii) Subjects who practiced the headstand with the support of a wall showed reduced finger plethysmogram amplitude suggesting increased sympathetic vasomotor tone. (iii) Practicing the headstand without support was associated with an increase in the skin conductance level, suggestive of increased sympathetic sudomotor tone. Hence, both categories showed similar changes in the HRV components though changes in sympathetic vasomotor and sudomotor activity were different. These changes suggest sympathetic activation, irrespective of the method of practice.


On serving the over enthusiastic out-of-shape student who thinks Yoga is about doing headstands, when it is actually about attaining a state of equanimity.


“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.”


For the headstand plus peacock combination, the most pronounced effects were on the glandular and metabolite functions: increased plasma cortisol, 17-hydroxycorticosteroids and 17-ketosteroids, decreased plasma catecholeamine without any change in VMA. Common general effects of all combinations include lower blood sugar, lower total serum lipids and increased plasma protein.


**Of Related Interest**

