



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY OPENING THE SHOULDERS

Enjoy the series of postures shown on page two to help open your shoulders and chest. These postures are also a good preparation for a Shoulderstand.

There's nothing quite like it to deeply open the chest, encourage the breath to flow freely, and soothe an agitated mind or energise a tired one.

By taking your shoulders through internal and external rotation, extension, and flexion in the following sequence, you'll expand the front of the chest and loosen up the shoulders. You'll create the opening in the armpits that's needed to stand on the top of the shoulders in Shoulderstand. When you can get up onto the shoulders, the posture is almost effortless.

This sequence will stretch the upper chest and armpits, encourage external rotation in your upper arms, and ultimately allow more freedom of movement for your shoulders. You'll feel your chest expand and your breath flow increase. When you're ready to practise Shoulderstand, you'll lift up with buoyancy and ease.

Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand)

Use blankets or half blocks with a folded yoga mat on top. Lie down, resting your head on the floor and your elbows and upper arms on the yoga mat. Make sure your neck is not resting on the blankets or blocks.

Lift your legs up and over into Halasana (plough). Externally rotate the upper arms by lifting your inner arms up and around toward your outer arms, and shift the tops of your shoulders toward your sacrum. Take your hands to your back, working them closer to your shoulders. Lift your torso and feet up, and press the tops of the shoulders and the outer elbows down. Hold for 2 to 3 minutes, release into Halasana, and then to lying down. Gradually increase your hold to 5 minutes over several weeks of regular practice.









To Begin: Breathe. Take a few minutes in a comfortable sitting position. With each inhalation, imagine you're directing your breath into the space behind the sternum, expanding the heart area. On your exhalation, slowly release the breath while continuing to feel expansion in the chest.

To Finish: Rest. Lie on your back in **Savasana**. Externally rotate your arms and widen your shoulder blades across your back, allowing the heads of the upper arm bones to release heavily toward the floor. Stay 5 to 10 minutes.

Contact Lynne on 00302892042356 or email lynne.gully@iremia.net

SHOULDER OPENING POSTURES

<p>Supported Chest Opener Begin to open the armpits as you lie over a block placed horizontally on the mat at its lowest height and directly below your shoulder blades. Bend your knees, feet flat on the floor, and support your head on a thickly folded blanket. Reach your arms up and gently rock side to side, widening the shoulder blades. Hold each elbow and reach your arms overhead, keeping your lower front ribs dropping down as you straighten your legs. Stay 2 to 3 minutes.</p>	
<p>Dolphin Posture To initiate the external rotation of your upper arms, come into Dolphin Posture. Come onto your knees and take your forearms to the floor. Hold a block between your palms, thumbs pointing up. Lift your knees off the floor, keeping them slightly bent. With your shoulders directly above the elbows, press your inner wrists firmly down, and then lift and widen the chest and shoulders, sending your chest back toward your thighs. Press your thighs back, straighten your knees, and externally rotate your arms by lifting your inner arms up and around toward your outer arms. Stay for 1 minute and then release your knees to the floor.</p>	
<p>Virasana (hero) legs with Gomukhasana (cow face) arms Sit down with your knees together and your feet outside your hips. If your sitting bones do not release to the floor, place a block beneath both sitting bones. Enjoy the increased range of motion you find as you stretch your left arm out to the side, palm facing back; then take your arm behind you, forearm parallel to your waist. Slide the forearm up your back; then reach up and over with your right hand and hook your fingers, or use a belt if you can't reach. Hold for 1 minute; then release and switch sides.</p>	
<p>Virasana (hero) legs with Garudasana (eagle) arms Still in Virasana, stretch your arms out in front of you, palms down. Move your shoulder blades apart from each other. Place the right elbow on top of the left, bend the elbows, pass the right hand in front of the left, and press the palms together. Lift the elbows slightly. Hold for 1 minute; then repeat on the second side.</p>	
<p>Purvottanasana (upward plank) variation Sit on the front edge of a folding chair. Wrap your hands around the back edge of the seat, thumbs pointing out to the sides, and straighten your arms. Lift your buttocks and step your feet forward, taking the torso and thighs into one diagonal line. Keeping the chin slightly tucked, widen your shoulder blades across your back and feel expansion through the chest. Hold for 1 minute.</p>	
<p>Setu Bandha (supported bridge posture) Use this supported variation of Bridge Pose to continue opening your chest. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place your arms out to the sides, 12 to 18 inches from your torso, palms up. Lift your lower torso off the floor, and rest your sacrum and tailbone on a block. Start with the block at the lowest height, adjusting it to a higher position if your low back is free from compression. Stay for 2 to 3 minutes.</p>	
<p>Matsyasana (fish posture) Do after a Shoulderstand. Feel the ultimate freedom in your shoulders, neck, and chest in this counter pose to Shoulderstand. Lie on your back, knees bent; then slide your hands, palms down, below your buttocks. Press the forearms into the floor, lift your head and chest, and release the crown of your head onto the floor or, if it doesn't reach, onto a folded blanket. To go deeper, straighten your legs one at a time. Stay for 30 seconds to 1 minute; then lift the head and chest, and release.</p>	