

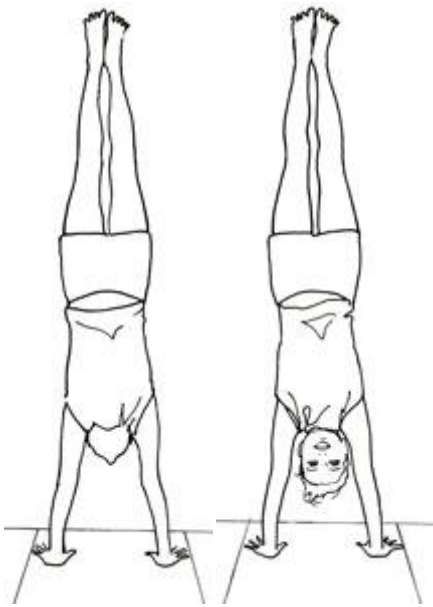
Adho Mukha Vrksasana: Full arm balance

This pose produces seemingly paradoxical effects. Kicking up into it is exhilarating. Then when you are in the pose you are grounded, and yet at the same time you are elevated. It's the opposite of Vrksasana (Tree Pose), both in orientation, and in how the elements play out. In Vrksasana you are rooted through your feet, in Adho Mukha Vrksasana through your hands. In Adho Mukha Vrksasana, the element of water gets pranitized in the legs through jumping. In other words, a sense of fluidity is experienced in the legs when you jump. In Vrksasana, the feet and legs are influenced strongly by earth.



1. Coming into the pose: Come onto your hands and knees facing a wall, positioning your hands twelve inches away from it. Spread your fingers and press down firmly through the index and thumb side of the palm. Raise your knees up off the floor and come onto your toes. Raise your front groins through your sit bones. Transfer your weight onto your hands, lift your shoulders and draw them and your upper back away from the wall. With straight legs, swing your pelvis toward the wall.

2. Hopping up: Sometimes the fear factor can prevent newcomers to this pose from getting up. In order to overcome fear, look at the floor as you prepare to hop up. Before you jump, you need to know that you can raise each leg high enough to give you the momentum you need to swing up. Stretch each leg up separately — beyond parallel. In other words raise each leg up, one at a time, above hip level — and then you know you have a chance. Now come up, one leg at a time: stretch your right leg up, bend the left leg and spring up. Know that you have to get the pelvis to the wall.

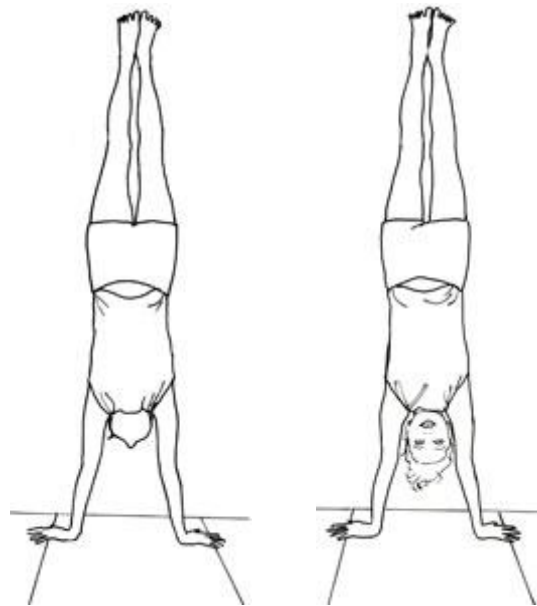


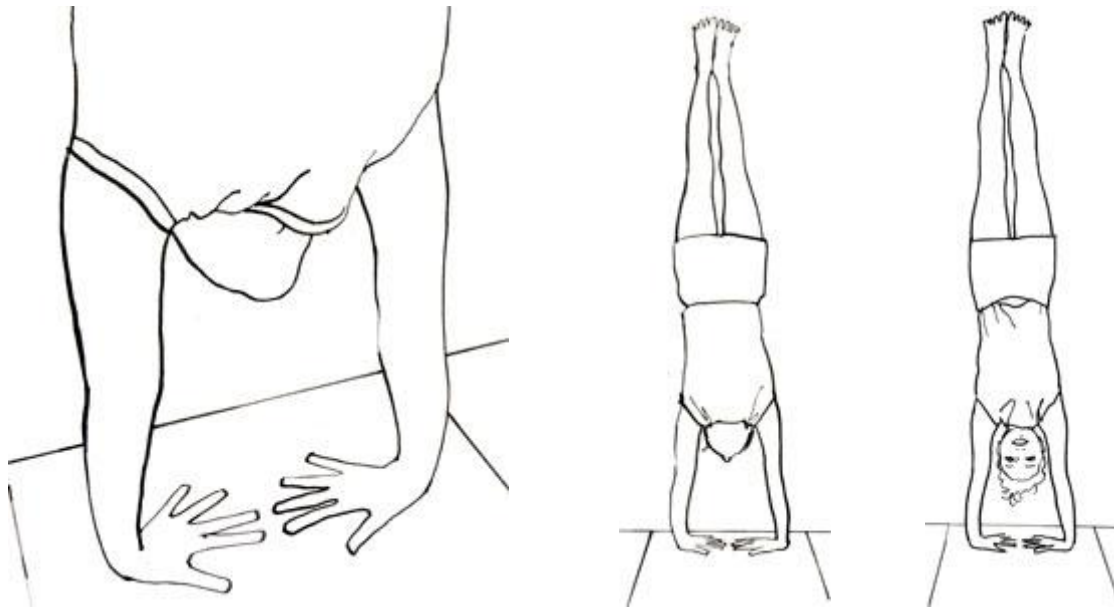
3. In the pose: Straighten your arms and maintain them parallel to each other and the wall. Still looking at the floor, lift your trapezium muscles up, away from your neck. Roll your inner thighs toward the wall and lift. Draw the buttock flesh toward the heels to lengthen the lower back. Slide your heels up the wall. Distribute your weight evenly on both hands. Still lifting your trapezium muscles away from the neck, release your head, so that the crown faces the floor. "Fill the element of air into the inner head of the calf." B.K.S. Iyengar. That is to say, "Broaden the calf."

Variations:

Level IV students: Once you can get up regularly and easily — and swinging up with the left leg as well as the right — spring with both legs at the same time, and see what happens!

For level III and IV students: Adho Mukha Vrksasana with hands turned out and hands turned in. It's best that you get the guidance of a qualified Iyengar teacher for these variations.





Cautions: Do not practice during menstruation. Do not practice this or any other sequence that involves jumping if you have back or knee injuries or any other medical problems.