



SOLUTIONS

HELP—MY SHOULDER'S KILLING ME!

Attention tennis players, swimmers, women who carry heavy bags: If you've got shoulder pain, there's an easy remedy to help keep you out of the operating room. Yoga enthusiast Loren M. Fishman, M.D., an assistant professor of rehabilitation medicine at Columbia University in New York City, says doing headstands may be the cure for rotator-cuff injuries.

THE UPSIDE OF A PERSONAL INJURY

When Fishman alleviated his own pain by inverting, he was inspired to study the move's effectiveness. Forty-nine patients were taught a headstand move with the hands clasped

behind the head in a V shape. They did it—or a modification—for 30 seconds just one time in his office. For most of them, range of motion improved significantly more than what's typically achieved by physical therapy or surgery,

and pain decreased by an average of 82 percent. Fishman believes the inversion stimulates healthy shoulder muscles surrounding the torn one, allowing them to take over.

GETTING STARTED

Headstand seems too challenging? Beginner variations work just as well. Try placing your legs on a chair with your forearms on the floor in a V position. Even easier: Place forearms on the wall and lean forward.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Other studies support a nonsurgical approach, showing that six weeks of acupuncture or soft-tissue massage can help ease pain and improve function. If there's a possibility of shoulder surgery or rehab in your future, ask your doctor about these gentler options. —ELIZABETH DEVITA-RAEBURN

INTEGRATIONS

Q&A WITH WOODSON MERRELL, M.D.

Chairman, Department of Integrative Medicine, Beth Israel Medical Center

Q ALL OF A SUDDEN I FEEL AWFUL. HOW DO I GET RID OF THE FLU?

As soon as you start to have symptoms like fever, fatigue, stomach upset, a bad headache, no appetite, and/or a dry cough (without much sinus or throat irritation, which are commonly due to cold)—call your doctor. During flu season, when a patient describes these symptoms and says she feels like she's been run over by a truck, I know it's likely influenza and not a cold. Generally, I like my patients to immediately start the homeopathic remedy Oscillococcinum (shown to shorten flu duration) with immune-enhancing over-the-counter products, such as medicinal mushrooms (Host Defense and others). Since flu can become severe, in some cases, prescription Tamiflu is a good option. While not a full cure, this star-anise extract appears to interfere with the way the virus multiplies—weakening it enough to let your body kill it more easily. Both treatments are most effective if started within 48 hours. It's also extremely important to stay home and rest. Unlike colds, you can't beat the flu—the more you move around, the worse you'll get. Besides rest (at least three to five days; flu can last for four weeks), drink fluids and eat moderately. Taking OTC pain relievers (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) should ease your discomfort. Not getting better? See your M.D.—flu can mimic mono, Lyme disease, salmonella poisoning, and other illnesses.



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GOOD TO KNOW

HEALTHY INVESTMENTS

November is open enrollment season, when many employers invite staffers to pick a health plan and decide how much of next year's salary they'll set aside—tax free—to cover eligible medical expenses. Think big this year. A \$2,500 cap on flexible spending accounts begins in 2013, so it's worth taking time to assess upcoming costs. (Prescription sunglasses? This might be the year!) Many complementary therapies, such as acupuncture, qualify, but you'll need letters of necessity from care providers or referring physicians. Start the paperwork now; you'll appreciate the extra funds in 2012. —EDR