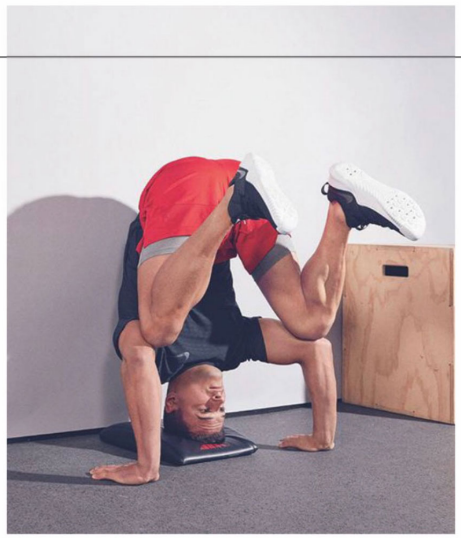
DO HANDSTAND PUSHUPS

Like pistol squats and muscle-ups, the handstand pushup has CrossFit to thank for its popularity—but it's more than a show-off move. It requires incredible upper body and core strength, the ability to stabilize the spine and neck, the flexibility to fully open shoulders and transfer massive energy through the wrists, and the mental fortitude to do it all upside down, says Conor Murphy, a Reebok CrossFit trainer in Canton, Mass. We'll be honest—they're not for everyone. If you are ready to go upside down, here's how to do it. Treat these of the three steps as mini-goals. And get really comfortable before moving on. It'll ensure you're really ready when you go full handstand pushup.



1

Tripod

Yogis will find this pose familiar. Start on hands and knees, crown of head on mat or cushion. Rest right knee on right elbow, then left knee on left elbow. As you hold the position, think about pushing away the floor with the palms of your hands, creating space for your neck, and engaging hips, which will take pressure off the lower back. Hold for 20-second increments.

ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?

Handstand pushups are an advanced skill that requires both upper-body strength as well as flexibility. Here are some prerequisites that you should be able to do. Individually, they are all great goals. And if you fall short in any, work on those before you try handstand pushups.

Strength requirements:

- You can bang out 25 full-range pushups.
- You're comfortable holding a headstand.
- Wall walks to practice that vertical extension. Start in a high plank, feet against the wall. Walk hands toward wall, and tap feet up wall, until you're vertical, facing the wall, then reverse to start.

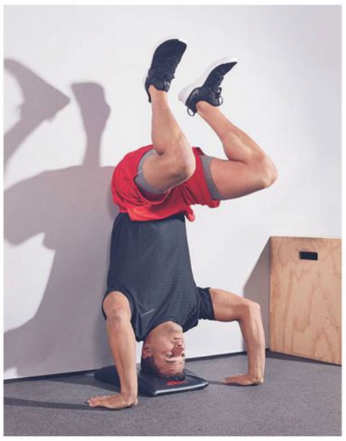
Flexibility requirements:

- Be able to perform barbell strict presses. (From a front rack position, press from shoulder to overhead without overextending spine)
- PVC pipe pass-throughs to practice shoulder mobility. Hold a PVC pipe in front of you, hands wide. With arms straight, roll shoulders back and bring pipe behind you. Reverse to start. Move hands closer as you gain flexibility.

2

Tripod to Headstand

From the tripod position, engage core, press hips back, and rotate lower body so heels move to the back wall (as shown). Then extend legs straight up into a headstand. Hold for 20 seconds, practicing controlled breathing, then reverse to return to start.



EXPERT TIP

Handstand pushups are a funny move. Some days they come easy, and some days they don't. If you're not feeling it, don't stress. Challenge yourself with a set of incline pushups, or do wall walks with shoulder taps at the top. Then try handstand pushups again in a couple days.



3

Handstand Descent to Handstand Pushups

Starting with your hands on the floor, kick into a handstand. (Have a friend help your feet find the wall the first couple of times.) Then do a controlled descent to a raised target or a mat, and return to start. Work on lowering, then work on pushing yourself back up.

ANTHONY CUNANAN

WWW.ANTHONYCUNANAN.COM
ANTHONY@ANTHONYCUNANAN.COM