Yoga During Pregnancy

Yoga is a safe, simple and a natural method of preparing the pregnant woman for motherhood and the baby for childbirth. The practice cultivates acceptance, peace and harmony for the entire family. Yoga is a great way to keep fit during pregnancy, to align your body optimally for healthy carriage and delivery of the baby, to provide breathing and relaxation techniques to use during pregnancy and labour and reduce discomfort in upper and lower back that sometimes accompanies carrying a baby (before and after pregnancy). In particular … any healthy process that helps keep you calm and relaxed are good for you and your baby too.

It is recommended that students to study with a teacher who has experience with the ever changing pregnant body. Ideally it's best to find a prenatal yoga class to help you stay within safe parameters at each stage of your pregnancy.

If you are new to yoga and pregnant, ask your osteopath or midwife if a prenatal yoga class would benefit you. You will probably be given an enthusiastic "thumbs-up"! However, if you have high blood pressure or other complications in your pregnancy, it is extremely important to check first before continuing (or starting) yoga practice.

Tips for Yoga During Pregnancy

Modify … Modify … Modify

In general, you want to avoid strain, compressing and twisting in the belly or abdomen and most inverted poses (headstands, handstands, shoulder stands) unless you are an
advanced practitioner. Absolutely no breath retention or breath of fire should be attempted. Above all ... listen to your body. Your baby will let you know what you need and what poses are uncomfortable (the difference between caution and internal guidance). And please ... don't practice yoga to the point where you're fatigued.

More Modifications for yoga during Pregnancy

The Basic Rule: The more you begin to show, the more challenging balance poses becomes so avoid postures that are uncomfortable or cause doubt. Or use the wall!

Pregnant women are generally told not to lie on their backs after the first trimester in order to prevent Vena Cava Syndrome (a lowering of blood pressure due to the baby pressing on the vena cava artery). Use common sense and listen to your body. It varies amongst different body types.

Bolsters and cushions can make a world of difference making postures less stressful. During deep relaxation you can bend your knees or lie on your side with cushions under your neck, baby and between your legs. During the second and third trimester, do not lie on your stomach.

All pregnant woman are gifted with relaxin. The purpose of this natural hormone is to facilitate the pelvis and hips to gracefully shift during pregnancy and child birth providing an easier passage way for the baby's arrival. With the gift comes responsibility. Pregnant woman need more support when they are stretching because of the amount of relaxin in their systems (causing ligaments and muscles to have more flexibility).

One Final Tip: During pregnancy ... take water and bathroom breaks liberally. Trust your body-wisdom and have faith of the grace nature gifts us.

Hero Pose Virasana

A Seated Pose for Centering

Place your block between your two ankles, with all ten toes reaching back. Lower your buttocks to the block as you sit upright. There should be no joint pain. You can also use a blanket if you do not own a block. Place your hands gently on your thighs ...
palms face up gathering the bliss falling from the sky. Try to sit tall, relaxing your shoulders and face muscles, bringing your gaze inward. Take ten mindful calming breathes through your nose.

Remove the block. Open your knees wider than your belly making room for your baby and fold forward to rest in *Balasana*, Childs Pose, a comfortable resting pose and a gentle forward bend. Breathe.

**Stretching Backs of Knees**

Kneel on all fours, arms, shoulder width and knees, hip width. Step your right leg back keeping your hips square. Curl your toes under and press out of your right heel firming your right thigh. Do not concave your lower back. Try to keep back in neutral spine (flat), crown of your head extending forward. Five deep breaths. Do left leg too. This pose builds lower back strength and stretches the backs of your legs.

**Pregnant Pelvic Tilts**

Kneel on all fours, inhale into neutral spine, flat back. Gaze at floor below, tail bone reaching back as crown of your head reaching forward.

Then exhale and round your back like a rainbow tucking your tail bone towards the floor, pubic bone towards your baby. Repeat ten times allowing your breath to orchestrate your movement. This strengthens the uterus, encouraging mindful breathing and eases lower back strain.
Standing Pelvic Tilts

Stand with wide legs, feet slightly turned out and knees bent for balance. Place your hands on the inside of your knees and press firmly to lengthen your inner thighs.

Relax your shoulders and your jaw. Inhale fully allowing your chest to open, flat back. Exhale round your spine like a rainbow tucking tail bone, tilting pubic bone towards your baby and dropping your chin to your chest. Orchestrate your movement with your breath.
Mountain Pose with Hands in Prayer Pose

Tadasana with hands in Anjali Mudra (offering)

Stand tall with your feet hip distance apart and parallel. Draw the energy up your legs firming your thighs. Tuck your tail bone under slightly and draw your belly back with our creating tension around your baby. Lift the sides of your ribs, opening your chest and relaxing your shoulders. Hands in prayer pose at lower sternum. Lift your sternum to greet your hands that are firmly pressing in to each other. Gaze softly forward or inward at your heart radiating towards your baby. Ten mindful breaths.
Moving Prayer Pose

Continue standing in Mountain pose. As your inhale open the hands out to your sides, elbows remain bent, shoulders soft. Notice your chest opening to be touched by your breath.

On the exhale slowly return the palm together in prayer pose at the heart. Do this ten times or more. Then rest in Mountain Pose. This helps your posture by opening your chest therefore allowing you to breathe more easily.

Cobbler Pose  *Baddha Konasana*

Sit tall on the fronts of your sits bones with the soles of your feet together, knees splay open lifting your spine away from the floor. You may need to sit on a blanket if your hips are tight. Also know you can place pillows under your knees if it is too strenuous on your inner tights.
Wide Leg Stretch *Upavista Konasana*

Spread your legs wide sitting on the fronts of your sits bones, lifting your spine away from the floor. Press out through your heels flexing your toes back. Press the backs of your ankles and thighs down at the same time.

Wide Leg Stretch with Twist

With your legs spread wide, place your right hand in front of you and your left hand behind you. As you inhale extend your spine away from the floor. As you exhale, twist your upper body to the left. Hold the pose and breathe opening your upper left chest. Five breaths and then do the other side.

Finally ... finish up this sequence for pregnancy with a resting posture.

**Corpse Pose Savasana**

Lie on your side with a blanket under your neck, wedging a cushion between your baby and the floor. Place a pillow between your legs and a blanket or cushion under your ankles. Take five to ten minutes here and relax.