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## **Guidelines - Pregnancy Yoga**

With thanks to Anne Tison

Your pregnancy is unique so the best thing you can do is to listen to your body since it is the best way for you to know how far you can take your body in a certain posture. Allow your body to guide you and follow its rhythms. Yoga is all about feeling. If it does not feel right for you, then it usually is not.

### **Getting Started**

- Wear loose comfortable clothing
- Yoga is practiced bare feet
- You should not practice yoga postures straight after a meal. Wait 1/2 hour for a drink or small snack and about 1 1/2 for a light meal. However, relaxation after a meal is very soothing.

### **Caution**

- Avoid Jumping (too much stress on the cervix)
- Double leg lifts (too much pressure on the abdominal muscles & lower back)
- Over-stretching (ligaments and tendons will not rebound which could cause uneven wearing of the cartilage later)
- Inverted postures (can cause compression of the placenta, which may interrupt the flow of oxygen to the baby)
- Breath retention (would also interrupt the flow of oxygen to the baby)
- Avoid anything that is putting pressure on the abdomen and cervix (for example lying on your front, bastrika pranayama and uddiyana bandha)
- Avoid fatigue and strain and all vigorous exercises (especially during first trimester). If you feel agitated, stop and rest until your breath and heartbeat have settled into a quiet, even rhythm before continuing with your practice.

**Always stop if you experience pain or feel light-headed.**

### **Practicing Yoga during pregnancy helps to:**

- Open the chest for deeper breathing
- Encourage exercises that open and strengthen the hip and pelvic area.
- Hold the spine erect to allow free flow of energy
- Connect with the baby and the changing body
- Steady the emotions
- Centre yourself to cope with change
- Allow the deep relaxation that is naturally within you to flow



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- The meditations and relaxation (Yoga Nidra) in the class helps you to sleep better, have better focus and concentration.

Modify the postures as you progress in your pregnancy. Do not put too much pressure on the abdomen and avoid strong twists and forward bends.

### **1st Trimester**

- Rest as much as possible and allow your body to do its work (especially between 11 to 14 weeks).
- Practice breath awareness and learn to breathe in a full and relaxed way.
- Use relaxation and visualisation to begin doing pelvic-floor exercises.
- Practice meditation using sound, especially soothing ones.

### **Caution**

- Twists (can aggravate nausea)
- Any poses that over stretches the lower abdomen (can prevent the fertilised egg from embedding in early stages)
- Standing still for too long (your lowered blood pressure can make you feel faint)

### **2nd Trimester**

- Avoid lying on your back with your legs straight when your belly begins to grow as this could affect the blood return from the legs and restrict the blood flow to the baby.

### **3rd Trimester**

- Use support when you can
- Avoid standing for long periods of time (can aggravate haemorrhoids and varicose veins) and anything strenuous
- Avoid lying on your back. Instead use more cushions to prop yourself up and support lower back.
- Avoid deep squats as they may affect the optimal foetal position and do not do any squats if the baby is breech.