



Yoga for Mothers

PRENATAL

A booklet on common FAQs on yoga practices during pregnancy

By:

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*Aasthaam tavaddeyam prasoothi samaye durvara soola vyadha,
Nairuchyam thanu soshanam malamayee sayya cha samvatsaree,
Ekasyapi na garbha bara bharana klesasya yasya kshmo dhathum,
Nishkruthi munnathopi thanaya tasya janyai nama.*

Oh mother mine,
With clenched teeth bore thou the excruciating pain,
When I was born to you,
Shared thou the bed made dirty by me for an year,
And thine body became thin and weak,
During those nine months that you bore me,
For all these in return,
Oh mother dearest,
I can never compensate,
Even by my becoming great.

|| Sri Adi Shankaracharya ||



The mere thought of a child blossoming inside your body is exhilarating. Becoming a mother is the best part of a woman's life and the moment pregnancy is confirmed, it brings out mixed emotions, excitement and anxiety together. Pregnancy doesn't only involve physical changes, but huge emotional variations too and hence for a healthy baby to be born, it's very necessary to maintain a calm and pleasant mindset.

Through the course of 9 months of pregnancy the body witnesses immense changes and sometimes the most pleasant experience can become a little painful too. This needs a solution that keeps the body fit, the mind relaxed & ensures the 9 months to be fun. The solution is prenatal Yoga.

Did you know that several researches have been carried out worldwide to assess the effect of prenatal yoga and have concluded that perceived stress decreases by 31.5% in the mothers that practice yoga during pregnancy as opposed to an increased stress in those who don't. Stress and its related impacts can be critical for you and your baby and it is imperative thus to improve your quality of life during pregnancy. Yoga not only decreases the common discomforts during pregnancy, maintains stress free pregnancy but many researches concluded that regular sessions improve birth weight, decrease preterm labour and even decrease IUGR (intra uterine growth retardation) with no increased complications.





A prenatal yoga session comprises of vyayamas, asanas, pranayamas & meditation/ relaxation. Practices change every trimester because of the changing anatomy & physiology of the body. From a lot more asanas in the first trimester to dietary changes, leg and back strengthening practices, the last trimester consists of fewer asanas, pelvic floor strengthening and whole lot of breathing exercises are done as the delivery date approaches. The sessions progress as per the changing needs of the mother in different phases of pregnancy.

Why Prenatal Yoga?

Manage typical problems: there are some common issues associated with different phases of pregnancy such as the problem of nausea, thyroid, high blood pressure, edema – swelling in hands and feet , anxiety, restlessness, acidity, back ache, fatigue etc. These commonly occurring problems can easily be managed through holistic and regular yoga sessions .

Improve Spinal Health: as the stomach protrudes the load is transferred to the spine & the lower back aches start from 5th month onwards. Yoga asanas leading & vyayamas ensure spinal health through -out pregnancy. With regular practice form the 1st month, no issue of spinal problem shall even occur.

Ease the process of normal delivery: The asanas and the yoga practices are oriented to prepare woman's body for normal delivery. Normal Delivery is very important for woman's health in future. Prenatal yoga postures help in strengthening the thigh muscles & flexing vaginal muscles for an easy dilation.

Samskaar (Impressions on Child): Meditation on oneself in this state is like giving the first impressions to the child that are certainly going to be with the kid for a lifetime. There is mantra chanting of certain special mantras that explains & elaborate philosophy of life & existence. This divine chanting nurtures the baby spiritually.



Will Yoga be safe during pregnancy?

Prenatal yoga is specifically construed for women who are pregnant. There are adequate precautions that need to be taken to ensure the safety – like no forward bends, no retention of breathing, not lying supine after 5 months etc.

These postures and vyayams help during pregnancy by strengthening the spine so that the increased belly weight can be conveniently carried & flex the pelvic muscles to facilitate a stress free normal delivery.

When can I start (from which month of pregnancy)?

Yoga can be started from the very onset of pregnancy which would then continue till end and even post birth. Infact, the earlier one starts the better it is.

Can one include other forms of exercise like walking or swimming along-with Prenatal Yoga sessions?

Yeah surely, prenatal yoga sessions are not contradictory to any other form of exercising. However, only after assessing the present lifestyle, the mother to be must decide the appropriate exercise routine she wishes to pursue during the 9 months.



I have been told that I have a lower placenta, can I practice yoga or would it be risky?

Firstly, in cases of lower placenta only partial and marginal lower placenta cases are taken for prenatal yoga. Even in these cases we take special care and completely avoid hip opening practices or any practice that works on the core. Further, special care is taken in watching the symptoms of these mothers to be and leg raises are recommended during the session and during the normal course of the day too. But since the placenta is to go up on its own in time, we ensure that our session does not hinder the process in any way. Barring some practices, lateral movements and modified practices can easily be done and many have benefitted from adequately utilising this trimester for practices, so we highly recommend it. We encourage open discussion with the respective gynaecologist to ensure the safety and health of the mother and baby.





Can I start learning Yoga during pregnancy?

Not a good time to learn normal practices of Yoga because prenatal yoga practices are specially designed to manage the issues in various phases of pregnancy & are carried out much differently than a normal yoga session which is a lot more rigorous. Infact during pregnancy, it is absolutely essential that you train only under those who are trained prenatal yoga therapists and have good experience.

What are the contraindications in Prenatal Yoga (conditions in which one must not practice)?

- Complete lower placenta
- Fetal distress
- Extreme obesity/ underweight
- Induced asthma
- Persistent vaginal bleeding
- Recurrent miscarriages
- Polyhydramnios & Oligohydramnios
- Intra-uterine growth restrictions (IUGR)
- Suspected ectopic pregnancy
- Dilated cervix
- Acute infection

Are there practices/ exercises for the “last” minute (labor phase)?

Yes certainly. For example, there are a few special labor time breathing techniques which help during contractions. Besides this, in the preparation for the delivery, practices in the last two months are more oriented towards opening up the hips, intense strengthening of the pelvic floor muscles and thigh muscles. Another example is **moolbandha**, which is now popularly called as the kaegal's lock. The practicing of **moolbandha** in different postures helps in dilation.



How frequently does one need to practice?

Based on your daily routine you could either choose 2 days a week schedule or 3 days a week.

Will yoga work in special cases of pregnancy such as IVF, hypertension, breech pregnancy, gestational diabetes etc?

Special cases of pregnancy are handled in a special way. In multiple pregnancy, pelvic strength is important and a lot of care is taken to maintain an adequate body weight and practices like moolabandha help in preventing any strain on the pelvic area. In hypertension, yoga helps a lot in easing out the overall stress in the body and special pranayama are taught to ensure good circulation in the body, which aids in managing the blood pressure. In cases of gestational diabetes and breech pregnancy, special asanas and their modifications are added to the session to help the mother.

Will Yoga make my labor pains any lesser?

Stretching and cultivating the muscles for birth inherently makes birthing easier. Yoga can be a great way to stay flexible, relive stress and prepare for birth. Yoga poses can help the mothers to be, relieve the back pain, fight indigestion, promotes healthy growth of the baby along with preparing the body for a quick and relatively painless birth.



What kind of problems can be managed with prenatal Yoga?

- Sciatica pain
- Ligament pain
- Swelling/ edema around ankles
- Morning sickness
- Acidity
- Insomnia/ sleeplessness
- Breathlessness
- Backache
- Hypo/ hyper-thyroid
- High blood sugar
- Fatigue





What should one keep in mind before starting with these sessions?

- It is very important to discuss & seek approval of the gynaecologist for the prenatal sessions.
- Please make sure that the therapist is trained to take prenatal yoga classes – which are different from the generic yoga sessions.
- Please share all the details (reports etc.) with the therapist before beginning the sessions.
- Forward bending, closed twists should be avoided. Modified inversions are practiced, only in special circumstances. Don't put any stress on the core and avoid jerky or rapid change of movements.

Does prenatal yoga help in weight – management during pregnancy?

Prenatal yoga sessions are not designed for weight management during pregnancy. However, it has been seen that women who are active & practicing yoga during pregnancy gain weight in the right proportion with relatively better distribution of the same. Food modifications are also part of the yoga regime that help in adequate weight management.

How is prenatal yoga different from physiotherapy prenatal exercises?

Physiotherapy exercises focus only on the skeletal system & therefore lay stress on stretching & strengthening of the muscles. Prenatal yoga is a holistic practice that not only strengthens the muscles of the body but also improves the condition of the internal organs – alleviating symptoms of gestational diabetes, hypertension etc & harmonize the hormone secretions in the body. Most importantly yoga practices manage stress and with a package of satvik diet, codes of conduct, asanas, pranayama and meditation, the overall benefits of a yoga session outweigh the gains from any other pregnancy centered mode of exercise regime.

A few after-thoughts about the sessions:

Here are a few after-thoughts:

“Prenatal Yoga Is ecstatic..kept me calm & composed and energetic throughout & helped me manage back pain & weight gain very well”. — **Namrata**

“My pregnancy was completely event free due to prenatal yoga. There was never an issue of back-ache or swelling etc. It was a smooth sail with yoga”. — **Reena**

“Prenatal yoga was extremely relaxing. I had a problem with low BP during pregnancy but Yoga could very well manage the fatigue due to that” — **Mansi**

“I had a problem with severe fascia pain during my second trimester and it was difficult to set foot on the ground. With just a few sessions and following some other advices from Mallika, my pain gradually reduced and remaining pregnancy was smooth” — **Dr.Amrita**

“I was anyways a case of high blood pressure and had late pregnancy, so was worried about my hypertension related issues. Mallika took a different session, shorter but it had basic joint movements, breathing exercises and lot of meditation. This helped me in sailing through my pregnancy without any anticipated BP issues. I also noticed a difference in my baby’s attitude after birth as she was much calmer and affectionate.” — **Swati**.



About Mallika



Mallika, the Yoga therapist has been teaching Yoga for the past 18 years. Born into a family of naturoapths, she has had the gift of alternative healing from a young age. A microbilogist turned Yoga therapist, she has made rigorous efforts in bringing forth the scientifically understandable and easily adaptable concepts of yoga. Yoga is an integral part of her life from a very young age. Under the guidance and grace of her **guruji**, she has learnt to be a seeker with deep reverence and gratitude towards our ancient teachers who have handed over this priceless knowledge to us.

She did her Masters in Yoga therapy (M.Sc) from Kasturba Medical College, Manipal & soon after started with her own organization called Mrityunjaya, that has been practicing traditional yoga practices with an uber outlook. Mrityunjaya was associated with Fortis Hospital for conducting antenatal & postpartum sessions. From corporate trainings – stress management, lifestyle & diet management, to treating chronic disorders, to taking specialized classes such as antenatal, infertility, psychosomatic disorders etc we continue to add yoga to several lives.




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ADDING YOGA TO YOUR LIFE