

YOGA FOR PREGNANCY

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Benefits Of Yoga During Pregnancy

- Pregnancy is one of the most beautiful aspects of womanhood. Each pregnancy, each child born, is a special opportunity for a woman to discover within herself great strength and flexibility. She can discover her great power yet her ability to surrender; her great compassion yet a detachment. Most importantly, her greatest capacity to LOVE.
- The experience of a **Natural Birthing** is a peak experience in your life. Yet, surprisingly, the experience of childbirth often leaves you physically shattered, emotionally bereft and mentally confused.
- There are difficulties and disappointments, but, ultimately you need to go past those varicose veins, edema, back pain, nausea, impatience, frustration, tiredness, abdominal discomfort, sleeplessness, depression.
- All these as well as birthing traumas can be overcome if the mind and heart remain **one-pointed** on the true purpose of procreation, rather than the unfolding effects of it. Yoga and Meditation have the capacity to produce a higher quality of conception, a healthier maternal environment for pregnancy and a more harmonious birthing experience.

Five Tools Of Yoga For Pregnancy

Yoga has **5 vital tools** for pregnancy. When followed together, they work wonders on your health and your capability to have a smooth pregnancy.

So what are these 5 tools:

Yoga Exercises – These gently work on the reproductive organs and pelvis to ensure a smooth pregnancy and a relatively easy childbirth. At the subtle level, these ensure optimum supply of blood and nutrients to the developing foetus.

Breathing or Pranayama – These powerful techniques ensure the abundant supply of oxygen and a better life force for you and your child. These methods work on your fitness during pregnancy.

Mudras and Bandhas – The psycho-physical stimulation of these gestures and locks have powerful effects on a woman's reproductive organs.

Meditation – As a therapeutic tool, meditation will help you resolve the deepest of neuroses, fears and conflicts, which are so common during pregnancy. Meditation brings with it an incredible awareness which helps you connect with your child in a way that is impossible to explain.

Deep Relaxation – Yoga Nidra (Yogic sleep) is particularly effective during pregnancy for physical and mental relaxation as well as for childbirth preparation.

First Trimester Yoga Exercises

1. Ardha Titali Asan (Half Butterfly)

How to do?

Sit with legs outstretched. Bend the right leg and place the right foot as far up on the left thigh as possible. Place the right hand on top of the bent right knee.



Hold the toes of the right foot with the left hand. While breathing in, gently move the right knee up towards the chest. Breathing out, gently push the knee down and try to touch the floor. The trunk should not move. Movement of leg should be achieved by the exertion of the right arm. Repeat with left leg. Slowly practice about 10 up and down movements with each leg. DO NOT STRAIN.

Benefits

It is an excellent practice for loosening of hip and knee joints, which shall enable faster delivery.

2. Poorna Titali Asan (Full Butterfly)

How to do?

Sit with legs outstretched. Bend the knees and bring the soles of the feet together, keeping the heels as close to the body as



possible. Fully relax the inner thighs. Clasp the feet with both hands.

Gently bounce the knees up and down, using the elbows as levers to press the legs down. Do not use any force. Repeat up to 20-30 times. Straighten the legs and relax.



Benefits

Tension from inner thigh muscles is relieved. Removes tiredness from legs.

3. Supta UdarakarshanAsan (Sleeping Abdominal Stretch Pose)

How to do?

Lie in the back. Interlock fingers of both hands and place hands beneath the head. Bend knees, keeping the soles of feet on the floor.



While breathing out lower the legs towards the right, trying to touch the knees on the floor. At the same time move the head towards the left, giving uniform twisting stretch to the entire spine. Repeat on the other side by bending legs towards left, and head towards right.

Benefits

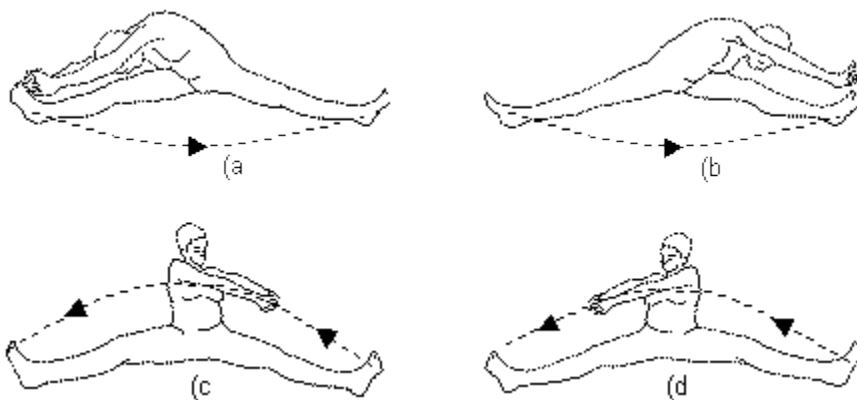
Removes constipation, improves digestion. Relieves stiffness and strain of spine caused by prolonged sitting.

4. Chakki Chalan Asan (Churning the Mill Pose)

How to do?

Sit with legs stretched out in front of the body about one foot apart. Interlock fingers of both hands and hold the arms out straight in front of the chest.

Make large circular movements over both feet, trying to take the hands over the toes on the forward swing and coming as far back as possible on the backward swing. Practice 10 times in each direction.



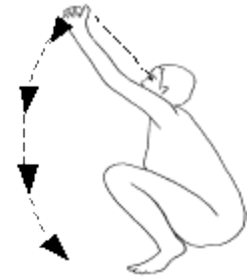
Benefits

Excellent asan for toning the nerves and organs of pelvis and abdomen preparing them for pregnancy. Useful in regulating menstrual cycle. Also an excellent post natal exercise.

5. Kashta Takshan Asan (Chopping Wood Pose)

How to do?

Sit in squatting pose with feet flat on the ground and one and a half feet apart. Clasp fingers of hand and place them on the floor between the feet. Straighten the arms and keep them straight throughout the practice. Elbows should be inside the knees. Imagine the action of chopping wood. Raise arms as high as possible, behind the head, stretching the spine upward. Look up towards the hands.



Make a downward stroke. Expel the breath making an "Ha" sound and removing all air from the lungs. Hands should return towards the feet. This is one round. Practice 5-10 rounds.

Benefits

It loosens the pelvic girdle and tones the pelvic muscles.

6. Marjari Asan (Cat Stretch Pose)

How to do?

Sit with buttocks on the heels (Vajrasana). Raise the buttocks and stand on the knees. Lean forward and place the hands flat on the floor. This is the starting position. Inhale while raising the head and depressing the spine so that the back becomes concave. Exhale, while lowering the head and stretching the spine upward.

At the end of the exhalation contract the abdomen and pull in the buttocks. Head will be now between the arms, facing the thighs. This is one round. It may be done for 5-10 times .Be careful not to strain yourself.



Benefits

This asan improves flexibility of the neck, shoulders and spine. Tones female reproductive system. Can be safely practiced during first 6 months of pregnancy.

7. Kati Chakrasan (Waist Rotating Pose)

How to do?

Stand with the feet about half a meter apart and the arms by the sides. Inhale while raising the arms to shoulder level. Exhale and twist body to left. Bring right hand to left shoulder and wrap left arm around the back. Look over left shoulder. Hold breath for 2 seconds, inhale and return to starting position. Keep feet firmly on ground while twisting. Repeat on other side. Do twisting smoothly without any jerks. Do about 5-10 rounds.



Benefits

Tones waist, back and hips . Induces a feeling of lightness and used to relieve physical and mental tension.

8. Tadasan (Palm Tree Pose)

How to do?

Stand with feet together and arms on the side. Raise arms over the head, interlock fingers and then turn the palms upward. Place hands over the head. Inhale and stretch the arms, shoulders and chest upwards. Raise heels to come up on the toes. Stretch whole body from top to bottom. Lower heels while exhaling and bring hands on top of the head. Relax for few seconds and repeat whole round 5-10 times.



Benefits

Helps develop physical and mental balance. Entire spine is stretched and loosened, helping to clear congestion of the spinal nerves. Also stretches rectos abdominal muscles keeping them nerves toned.

9. Utthanasan (Squat and Rise Pose)

How to do?

Stand erect on feet about a meter apart, with toes turned out. Interlock fingers of both hands and let them hang loosely in front of



the body. Slowly bend knees and lower buttocks. Straighten knees and return to upright position.

Benefits

Strengthens muscles of middle back, uterus, thighs and ankles.

10. Kandharasan (Shoulder Pose)

How to do?

Lie flat on back. Bend knees, place soles of feet flat on the floor with the heels touching the buttocks. Feet and knees may be hip width apart. Grasp ankles with hands. Raise buttocks and arch back backward.



Try to raise the chest and navel as high as possible, without moving feet or shoulders. In final position, the body is supported by the head, neck, shoulders, arms and feet. Hold pose as long as it is comfortable. Release ankles and relax.

Benefits

Realigns the spine and relieves backache. It massages and stretches the colon and abdominal organs, improving digestion. Tones female reproductive organs and especially recommended for women who tend to miscarry. Should not be done in advanced stages of pregnancy.* Under expert guidance, it has been successfully used to turn the baby when it is a breech presentation.

Second Trimester Yoga Exercises

1. Matsya Kridasan (Flapping Fish Pose)

How to do?

Lie on stomach with fingers interlocked under the head. Bend the left leg sideways and bring the left knee close to the ribs.

Right leg should remain straight. Swivel the arms to the left and rest the left elbow on the left knee. If this is not comfortable rest it on the floor. Rest the right side of the head on the right arm. Relax in the final pose, and after some time, change sides. Bent knee and head may be supported on a pillow for further comfort.



Benefits

Stimulates digestion and removes constipation. Relaxes nerves of the legs. In later months of pregnancy, lying on the back may cause pressure over major veins and block the circulation. In such circumstances, this posture is ideal for relaxing and sleeping. Also redistributes excess weight around waistline.

2. Vajrasan (Thunderbolt Pose)

How to do?

Kneel on the floor. Bring big toes together and separate the heels. Lower the buttocks onto the inside surface of the feet with heels touching the side of the hips. Place hands on knees, palms down. Back and head should be straight, but not tense.



Benefits

Enhances digestive functions and can be practiced directly after meals. Relieves stomach ailments like hyperacidity often a trouble faced during pregnancy. Alters blood flow and nervous impulses in the pelvic region and strengthens pelvic muscles. Assists women in labor.

3. Bhadrasan (Gracious Pose)

How to do?

Sit in vajrasan (above). Separate the knees as far as possible, while keeping the toes in contact with the floor. Separate the feet just enough to allow the buttocks and perineum to rest on the floor. Try to separate the knees. Do not strain.

Benefits

Same as vajrasan.

4. Marjari Asan (Cat Stretch Pose)

How to do?

Sit with buttocks on the heels (Vajrasan). Raise the buttocks and stand on the knees. Lean forward and place the hands flat on the floor. This is the starting position. Inhale while raising the head and depressing the spine so that the back becomes concave. Exhale, while lowering the head and stretching the spine upward. At the end of the exhalation contract the abdomen and pull in the buttocks.

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Benefits

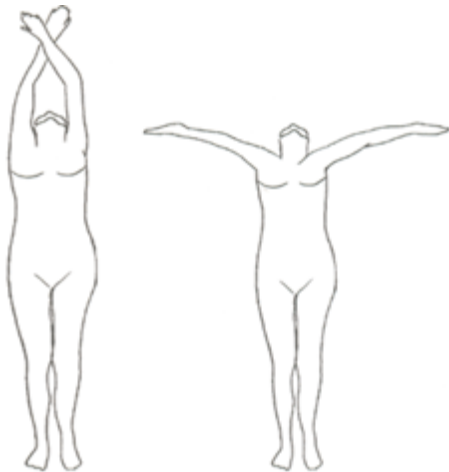
This asan improves flexibility of the neck, shoulders and spine. Tones female reproductive system. Can be safely practiced during first 6 months of pregnancy.

5. Hasta Utthanasan (Hand Raising Pose)

How to do?

Stand with feet together and arms on the sides. Cross hands in front of body. Inhale and slowly raise arms over the head, keeping them crossed. At same time bend head slightly backward and look up at the hands.

Exhale and spread arms out to the sides at shoulder level.. Inhale and reverse the movement, re-crossing the arms above the head. Exhale and lower the arms straight down in front of the body.



Benefits

Removes stiffness from the shoulders and upper back. The deep synchronized breath improves breathing capacity. Influences heart and improves blood circulation. Whole body, especially the brain receives an extra supply of oxygen.

6. Tadasan (Palm Tree Pose)

How to do?

Stand with feet together and arms on the side. Raise arms over the head, interlock fingers and then turn the palms upward. Place hands over the head. Inhale and stretch the arms, shoulders and chest upwards. Raise heels to come up on the toes. Stretch whole body from top to bottom. Lower heels while exhaling and bring hands on top of the head. Relax for few seconds and repeat whole round 5-10 times.



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without any jerks. Do about 5-10 rounds.

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Tones waist, back and hips . Induces a feeling of lightness and used to relieve physical and mental tension.

8. Utthanasan (Squat and Rise Pose)

How to do?

Stand erect on feet about a meter apart, with toes turned out. Interlock fingers of both hands and let them hang loosely in front of the body. Slowly bend knees and lower buttocks. Straighten knees and return to upright position.



Benefits

Strengthens muscles of middle back, uterus, thighs and ankles.

9. Meru Akarshanasan (Spinal Bending pose)

How to do?

Lie on right side with left leg on right leg. Bend right arm. Placing the elbow on the floor. Support head on right palm. Place left arm on left thigh. Raise the



left leg as high as possible, slide the left hand to the foot and grasp the big toe. Repeat on other side.

Benefits

Relaxes the hamstring, inner thigh and abdominal muscles and stretches the muscles of the sides of the body rendering them stronger and flexible.

Third Trimester Yoga Exercises

1. Ardha Titali Asan (Half Butterfly)

How to do?

Sit with legs outstretched. Bend the right leg and place the right foot as far up on the left thigh as possible. Place the right hand on top of the bent right knee.



Hold the toes of the right foot with the left hand. While breathing in, gently move the right knee up towards the chest. Breathing out, gently push the knee down and try to touch the floor. The trunk should not move. Movement of leg should be achieved by the exertion of the right arm. Repeat with left leg. Slowly practice about 10 up and down movements with each leg. DO NOT STRAIN.

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How to do?

Sit with legs outstretched. Bend the knees and bring the soles of the feet together, keeping the heels as close to the body as possible.



Fully relax the inner thighs. Clasp the feet with both hands. Gently bounce the knees up and down, using the elbows as levers to press the legs down.

Do not use any force. Repeat up to 20-30 times. Straighten the legs and relax.

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Tension from inner thigh muscles is relieved. Removes tiredness from legs.

3. Supta UdarakarshanAsan (Sleeping Abdominal Stretch Pose)

How to do?

Lie in the back. Interlock fingers of both hands and place hands beneath the head. Bend knees, keeping the soles of feet on the floor. While breathing out lower the legs towards the right, trying to touch the knees on the floor.



At the same time move the head towards the left, giving uniform twisting stretch to the entire spine. Repeat on the other side by bending legs towards left, and head towards right.

Benefits

Removes constipation, improves digestion. Relieves stiffness and strain of spine caused by prolonged sitting.

4. Ankle Crank

How to do?

Bend the right leg up and place the foot overhanging the left knee. Hold the right toes with the left hand. Steady the right ankle with the the right hand. Crank the right ankle around in a large circle, exploring to the very perimeters of movement. Do 10 rotations in each direction and then 10 rotations in each direction with the other ankle



Benefits

Good for stiffness and poor circulation in the feet. Helps extend setting time in meditation postures.

Pregnancy Advice

Specially useful in case of edema, cramping, post epidural numbness in the feet and legs.

5. Shoulder Rotation

How to do?

Single Arm Place the right fingertips up on the right shoulder. Slowly



rotate the arm and shoulder joint around as if drawing a large circle with the tip of the elbow.

Extend the movement to rotate fully into the shoulder joint. Do 5 times one way and then reverse the direction for 5 circles. Repeated on the left side.



Double Arm Raise the arms up, fingers on both shoulders. Slowly rotate both arms together in large circles. Try to stretch the elbows as far back as possible, and try to touch them together at the front. Go 5 times in one direction and then 5 times reverse.



Breath Inhale when opening the chest as the elbows go backwards, exhale when the elbows move towards touching at the front.

Benefits

Improves circulation and flexibility in the shoulders and upper back. Releases tensions from around the heart and lungs. Encourages better breathing. Especially effective for release of neck tension if followed by the neck series.

For mothers-to-be, practice throughout pregnancy and post-nasally as this exercise helps to stimulate proper function of the mammary glands.