

PRENATAL YOGA QUICK REFERENCE PAGE

Here are some general prenatal yoga tips and guidelines for all yoginis who have begun the amazing journey into motherhood. The first thing to remember is that every pregnancy is different, even for the same woman. It is always best to listen to your body and do only what feels right for you each day. If you are new to yoga, now is not the time to overdo it. Modify accordingly, especially when trying new poses. Concentrate on maintaining good alignment and breathing deeply.

1st trimester - the first four weeks: Don't stress if you did something 'not recommended.' Most women don't even know they're pregnant until at least the 5th week! As far as yoga goes, you can continue practicing if it feels okay, keeping in mind not to strain or overheat.

5-8 weeks: Now that you know you are pregnant, you'll start feeling the changes in your body. It's time to begin to modify your yoga. Don't over work and get dehydrated! (Your heart rate should not go past 150 bpm.) Avoid excessive twisting and abdominal 'crunches' as a precaution. If you feel sick, listen to your body and rest more. Eat. Let go of the idea that you should have to have the perfect body when you're pregnant. It is fine to continue your regular yoga practice (being mindful of the precautions listed on pages 26-27 and paying close attention to how you are feeling), but it is also good to start learning how to modify your poses.

9-12 weeks: This is a nice time to back up your yoga practice even more and make sure everything sticks (risks of miscarriage and birth defects will drop substantially by the end of the month). Consider limiting inversions for this period, and avoiding any transitions that may be jarring. Refrain from deep lower belly twists. Take care in backbends not to overstretch the belly. You may have to ease up on these until they feel better and engage your transverse abdominals for more support. If you haven't been to a prenatal yoga class yet, now would be a great time to start.

2nd trimester: If you weren't feeling so great during your first trimester, rejoice, relief is in sight. The nausea should subside, and you may notice that you have more energy now. If you love inversions, now is the safest time to put them back in. Headstands and handstands can be done for short periods if they feel okay. Make sure to use a wall, or ask the teacher for support, because your center of gravity and ability to balance may shift from day-to-day. If inversions are new for you, wait until after your baby arrives to start. Your yoga practice should consist mainly of standing poses, squats, shoulder and hip openers, leg strengtheners and stretches, breathing exercises, transverse abdominal exercises and kegels. Keep your knees on the floor in chaturanga and do not do anything directly on your belly — your baby likes lots of space. Remember to continue to drink plenty of water.

By the end of the fourth month, because of your growing baby and uterus, lying flat on your back could put excessive weight on the vena cava (a major vein), which may cut off blood flow and oxygen to you and your baby. You will feel dizzy before the baby is in any danger. This does not happen for everyone, but to be safe, place a blanket under your head and upper back at a five degree incline to keep your head above your heart. The most optimal resting position is on your left side since this brings maximum blood flow to baby. Therefore, practice savasana on your left side.

3rd trimester: You're getting pretty good at knowing what you can and can't do by now. Continue to modify poses using props, and avoid doing anything that closes the front of your body and overstretches your ligaments. Keep your legs wide apart for seated poses, and don't push too far. Some days you'll have energy for your practice and other days you won't. Remember to do your kegel exercises regardless. Try doing more restorative poses to calm the mind and help you connect to your baby. This is such a magical time. Make sure you slow down enough to enjoy this miracle of life within you. If you haven't been to prenatal classes yet, now is the time. It's a wonderful way to connect with other women and make lasting new friendships for you and your baby.

