

Pink Lotus Yoga Professional Yoga and Teacher Training Program

Notes on Prenatal Yoga

Some opening thoughts:

“Teach in a way that teaches students to trust their instincts,” says Judith Hanson Lasater, a yoga teacher, physical therapist, and author of Yoga for Pregnancy. “If something feels bad, stop; if something feels really, really good, keep doing it. A pregnant woman’s intuition is why the human race is here, so I want them to learn to trust it.” –Judith Lasater

“A pregnant woman is not sick or injured. Help her discover the strength and power in her body. While you need to modify some poses, she is still a strong, capable student and does not need to be fussed over constantly. Give her some options and let her do the practice in a way that feels good to her. She is the only one who really can feel what is going on in her body, and she needs to learn to trust her own instincts. With a little encouragement and a lot of practice, yoga will become a crucial tool for her birthing experience.” --unknown

Remind your more advanced yogi prenatal students this isn't a time to advance their practices. Simpler postures, postures not held as long, and avoiding building a lot of tapas should be the basis of their practices.

In prenatal class, women love to share and bond. Provide time for this in your sequence.

Every pregnancy is different, and not all pregnancies are without problems physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and even financial. Guide each pregnant woman to trust her own body and practice when she is in your class.

More and more prenatal teacher trainings are popping up; as a CYT, you can take 25-100 extra hours to become prenatal-certified, you can take another 200 hr training, or you can get really advanced and take a 300-hour. More and more, 'regular' 200 hour teachers are getting prenatal students dropping in to general (public, non-prenatal) classes.

More and more doctors and pediatricians are prescribing yoga, but sometimes not prenatal yoga (for lack of awareness of this specialty class).

FIRST TRIMESTER

Students might come to your general class and advise you that they are pregnant. They might or might not tell you that they have not gone public with this knowledge, so discretion is best.

Students in the first trimester don't need much modification; since the fetus is so small, pregnant woman can do most of what non-pregnant students do. Modifications might include props for make students comfortable if they are tired or support their bodies for balance or ease.

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SECOND TRIMESTER

Joints are beginning to loosen up now due to hormone Relaxin

Slowly expanding girth will affect sense of balance

Don't have students hold poses for long

Take time getting them in and out of positions. Move everyone slowly and carefully to avoid injury.

Avoid supine positions (other than brief transitions) in 2nd and 3rd trimesters; keep blood flowing properly to uterus.

Considered the 'honeymoon' trimester in the nausea from 1st is commonly alleviated and 3rd trimester discomfort has not yet arrived

THIRD TRIMESTER

PROPS: Perform standing poses with heel to the wall or use a chair for support to avoid losing balance/risking injury; Props such as blocks and straps can help greatly

Don't hold poses for a long time except for Relaxation

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GOOD POSES AND PRACTICES DURING PREGNANCY

Breathing exercises:

Sitali, Long Deep Breath; Ujjayi Breath; Breath of fire first trimester only if at all. Avoid Kapalabhati and Bastrika.

At mat or at wall and/or chair:

- Warrior I (*virabhadrasana I*)
- Warrior II (*virabhadrasana II*)
- Tree (*vrksasana*)
- Eagle
- Downward-Facing Dog (*adho mukha vrksanasana*) can energize body, but it's best not to do this position in your third trimester (can be performed facing wall as a half Downward Dog)
- Triangle Pose
- (Amrit) Half Moon
- Golden Seed (Yang)

At mat; offer blankets, straps, bolsters, and block

- Easy Pose
- Child Pose
- Happy Baby Pose
- Hero Pose
- Bridge Pose
- Side-Lying Position for Savasana/blanket rolled between legs can provide great support for hips and legs
- Cat-Cows from table, seated, and in chair
- Cobbler Pose
- Reclined Cobbler Pose
- Supported Side Plank
- Legs up the Wall

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Avoid:

- Locks (some say Mula Bhandha 1st trimester is okay),
- Leg Work (except on side)
- On the back (3rd trimester, some say in 2nd, too)
- Big Inversions (shoulderstand, headstands, handstands)
- Half/small inversions (2st and 3rd trimesters)
- Tight twists
- Big Backbends

POSTURES FOR COMMON PRENATAL CONDITIONS

Nausea: Reclined Hero/Saddle with Bolster, Legs up the Wall

Sciatica: Caterpillar, Warrior I and II, Wide Angle Seated Forward Bend

Backache: Warrior poses, supported/half front folding, supported gentle twists

Fatigue, Restlessness, Lack of good sleep: Savasana/Restorative Yoga

Internal Heat: Sitali Pranayama