



YOGA IN PREGNANCY – THE GUIDE TO HEALTHY PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood is pleasant gift given to women. Pregnancy is a period in a lady life when she faces so many kinds of changes. It is an amazing time when she will experience both physical and emotional changes unexpected and surprising. The period of pregnancy is associated with maternal stress and host of negative consequences which might affect the fetal development. The fetal exposure to maternal stress and stress related peptides is a risk factor for adverse outcomes on the programming of the nervous system and brain morphology of fetuses, infants and children. Hence it is important to reduce stress and provide quality of life to expecting mother for healthy development of fetus. Yoga serves as an important entity in the reduction of negative symptoms associated with pregnancy and birth. The studies suggest that approximately 35% of women aged 28-33 years already practice yoga, it is important to evaluate its effects on the maternal experience of stress, anxiety, pain, discomfort, and other variables as well as on labor and birth outcome. Yoga practicing includes physical postures and breathing techniques which minimizes the complication of pregnancy, like pregnancy induced hypertension, intrauterine growth retardation and pre-term delivery etc. An approach to yoga in pregnancy can improve birth weight; decrease pre-term labour, decreased IUGR with least or no complications.

KEYWORDS: Pregnancy, Yoga, Asanas, Pranayama, Birth weight, stress.

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is an extraordinary spiritual science of self-development and self-realization that shows us how to develop our full potential in our many sided live physical, vital, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. The many methods of yoga span of vast range from physical postures to breathing practice, mantra and meditation, all based upon a philosophy of consciousness and natural way of life. Yogasana often been thought of as form of exercise are really techniques which play in keeping the physical body in position and in cultivating awareness, relaxation concentration and meditation. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit term “yug” and directly translates to as “to unite”; that means to work towards a unified experience of the self and improved health. Most recognized for its potential to create balance along emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual dimensions. Yoga is a comprehensive system that uses physical postures (asana), breathing exercises (pranayama), concentration and meditation (dharana and dhyana), and contemplative practice. Yoga in pregnancy is multi dimensional physical, mental, emotional and intellectual preparation to answer the challenges faced by a pregnant woman. The challenges of pregnancy are revealed by the state of happiness and stress while yoga

is a skill to calm down the mind. Pregnancy in a woman is a condition in which woman changes both from inside as well as outside. These changes create obstacles or hurdles in the normal life of a pregnant woman and yoga in pregnancy can help the women to cruise through these changes and challenges. Practicing yoga during pregnancy provides a great range of activity and benefits to unborn child and mother by numerous ways. Yoga soothes the mind, refocus the energy and prepare the woman physiologically and psychologically for labour.

Benefit of practicing yoga during pregnancy.

► Supports Changing Of Body

In pregnancy, the body experiences "an accelerated pace of change," and needs help adjusting and compensating. Yoga practice is designed to support the changes that happen in a pregnant body; offering women healthy & safe ways to stretch their muscles and strengthen their bodies – their lower bodies in particular – to ease the process of supporting a growing belly.

► Tones Important Muscle Groups

Yoga tones the physical body, especially the pelvic floor, hip, and abdominal core muscles, in preparation for the

birthing process. A properly toned muscle has the right balance between length and strength – it is neither too lax nor too tight. Building and maintaining muscle tone during pregnancy, with yoga poses like lunges and gentle backbends, can help minimize the aches and pains of those nine months, and are key in bringing your body back to a toned condition after delivery.

► **Prepares for Labor and Delivery**

Yoga helps to experience childbirth with minimal or no pain medication. Working to connect with yogic methods of deep, mindful breathing can help the body loosen and relax, and help women get to a mammalian place.

► **Promotes Connection With Baby**

Yoga is a gentle reminder to take the time out of a busy work and home life to care for and bond with your growing baby. As pregnancy progresses, body's different responses to yoga poses will be a reminder of other physical changes happening in your body.

► **Provides Relief From Common Pregnancy Complaints**

Yoga may be the cure for what ails you if you're suffering from common pregnancy discomforts such as lower back pain, nausea, insomnia, headaches, shortness

of breath, and carpal tunnel syndrome. By stretching and toning muscles, it helps blood circulate throughout the body in a healthy way. Also, deep breathing can bring much-needed oxygen to baby and to own muscles. The multidimensional approach of yoga to both physical and emotional health can help body take the uncomfortable aspects of pregnancy in stride.

► **Gives a Healthier Pregnancy**

Research has confirmed a healthy mom is more likely to have a healthy baby. In fact, a 2012 study found that women who regularly practiced yoga during pregnancy were less likely to have preterm labor or to deliver a low-birth weight baby.

Regimen for yoga during pregnancy

The regimens for yoga were divided into 3 categories broadly according to trimester.

First trimester Asanas:-The Yoga Asanas advised during the first trimester with slight modification such as avoidance of inversion, closed twist and back bends that might compress the uterus and cause low blood circulation to uterus followed with a long relaxation phase after each asanas were advised. The Yoga Asanas like Virabhadrasana, Vrikshanam was advised.

Table No. 1: First trimester asanas.

Sr no	Asanas (Postures)	
1	Utthitatrikasan (Extended triangle pose)	It strengthens the pelvic floor muscles, thighs and calf muscles. Increases the flexibility of spine and improves digestion.
2	Virbhadrasan (Warrior pose)	It stretches the groin area, strengthens the body and back muscles and tones up the lower body. Increases stamina and flexibility and relieves backache.
3	Vrikshasan (Tree pose)	It stretches the legs, back and arms which invigorates the body. It helps to improve concentration.

Second trimester Asanas:- The Asanas practiced on lying back were avoided as it reduces the blood circulation to uterus. The center of gravity starts shifting to right so all

standing poses with heel against wall for support were advised. The asanas advised was Vajrasana, Bhadrasana, Katichakrasana.

Table No. 2: Second trimester asanas.

Sr.no	Asanas (Postures)	
1	Vajrasan	This asana enhances digestive system which increases the energy uptake. Alters blood flow and nervous system impulses in the pelvic region. Relieves stomach ailments like hyperacidity and it is the only asana that can be practiced after taking meals
2	Matsyakridasan (Flapping fish pose)	Stimulates digestion and relieves constipation. It relaxes the nerves of legs and this is an ideal asana for relaxed sleep. It improves blood circulation.
3	Marjariasan (Cat stretch pose)	Is very helpful in toning the female reproductive system and muscles of pelvis. This asana increases the flexibility of neck, spine and shoulders muscles which are essential for bearing down efforts during labour.

4	Tadasan (Mountain pose)	Stretches the entire spine and helps to clear the congestion of spinal nerves. It also helps in developing physical and mental balance. It stretches and strengthens the rectus-abdominus muscle which is an accessory muscle for bearing down.
5	Bhadrasan (Gracious pose)	This asana benefits the digestive system and helps in relieving various stomach ailments. It helps in toning the muscles of female pelvic region. Along with meditation, it relieves mental stress.
6	Kati chakras an (waist rotating pose)	Tones up the muscles of waist, back and hips. It induces the feeling of lightness and relieves physical and mental stress.

Third trimester Asanas: The asanas which do not exert pressure on abdomen wall were advised. Supine poses were avoided. Yogic asanas like Ardha titali asana,

Poorna titali asana, Chakki chalan asan, Uttanasan was advised.

Sr.no	Asanas (Postures)	
1	Ardhatitaliasan (Half butterfly)	Is an excellent asana for loosening of hip joints, which enables fast and easy delivery.
2	Pornatitaliasan (Full butterfly)	Tones up pelvic girdle. It relieves the tension from inner thigh muscles and removes the tiredness of legs. This asana increases the stretching ability of perineum.
3	Chakkichalanasan (Churning mill pose)	Is an excellent asana for toning the nerves and muscles of pelvis and abdomen and prepare them for delivery.
4	Utthanasan (Squat and Rise pose)	This asana strengthens the muscles of back, uterus, thighs and ankles. It tones up the pelvic girdle and this asana is equivalent to sweeping floor. Thus enables fast and easy delivery.

DISCUSSION

Pregnancy is a stage in which women carries fetus for nine months in her womb. Hence a practice of regular asana and pranayam may help women to undergo normal labor and give birth to healthy baby. Pranayam (Breathing exercise) and Dhyana (Meditation) relaxes the mind, refocuses the energy and relieve stress from impatient and tensed pregnant woman. Yoga can be of great help to the expectant mothers during the pregnancy, at childbirth time and in post-delivery stages. The simple yoga poses help to make the body more flexible, improve posture, and ease many pregnancy problems. It prepares both body and mind for new situations and changes that occur during and after pregnancy.

Yoga and breathing meditation techniques help to stay fit, healthy and happy during pregnancy and prepare body for labor. It can reduce anxiety and unwanted worries. Yoga also helps after pregnancy; it strengthens abdominal muscles and pelvic floor and helps to get back to pre-pregnancy shape faster.

Yoga practicing includes physical postures and breathing techniques which minimizes the complication of pregnancy, like pregnancy induced hypertension, intrauterine growth retardation and pre-term delivery etc. An approach to yoga in pregnancy can improve birth weight; decrease pre-term labor, decreased IUGR with

least or no complications. It relieves oedema and cramping which is quite common in last months of pregnancy. Yoga helps to reduce morning sickness, mood swings, and nausea. It also helps to decrease fatigue and tenderness, and also the swelling of breasts. It also increases energy level and helps in slowing the metabolism, thus restore calm and focus. Yoga also helps in reducing inflammation and swelling around joints. It strengthens and massages the abdomen and improves the digestive system. Yoga helps to restore the uterus, abdomen and the pelvic floor after childbirth. It also helps to relieve upper back tension and breast discomfort after pregnancy. Yoga helps to regain the fit and shapely body after pregnancy.

CONCLUSION

Yoga in pregnancy can improve birth weight, decrease pre-term labour, decreased intra uterine growth retardation (IUGR) with least or no complications. Practicing yoga reduces the mental stress; manage pain and symptoms of depression. So, Yoga must be included in the pregnancy regime to attain the higher level of fitness for both mother and child.

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