

# Guidelines for Pregnancy

## Information Sheet

YogaHealth does lend itself well towards pregnancy because it is gentle and nurturing while strengthening and relaxing. However because of the weight of the body as pregnancy develops you may need to spend more time on your side, rather than on the back, especially towards the end of the pregnancy. This is especially important to be aware of, because of the time that is spent on the back in class.

Pregnancy for most women is a normal, wonderful and challenging time that lasts approximately forty weeks -

- 1st trimester at 3 months
- 2nd trimester at 6 months
- 3rd trimester at 9 months



## Some helpful advice

Being pregnant the best advice would be to trust and listen to your body, only doing what feels right for you. It doesn't matter if the person next to you is doing something really impressive that you could surely do – you are PREGNANT and need to take care of and be kind to your body, it is working harder than you realise!

You should place plenty of emphasis on going softly (especially towards the last trimester) and resting on your side whenever you feel to. This can be an ideal time to tune into your breathing, and your baby.

Relaxation is the KEY to enjoying your pregnancy. In class, let yourself find what suits you, knowing that there are possible options for many of the poses, using bolsters, chairs or pillows etc.

- ◆ NEVER draw or suck in the stomach in while pregnant. This includes the Paradoxical Breath. Ignore the movement and continue belly breathing instead.
- ◆ Any movement which involves pulling the knees or legs into the chest can be made comfortable for growing bellies by taking the knees wider apart, you will still get the same release. So when in Tucked Womb, for example, have the knees wide apart; also spread the knees wide in Yoga Mudra.  
Avoid any movements that 'cramp' the belly. Useful to find new ways of doing them that prove to be more comfortable.

- Stretching the belly too much is not a good idea, as the ligaments are already being stretched and you don't want to risk tearing them. Joints are already opened and supple via 'Relaxin' hormone. Be very gentle with postures such as Cobra, Sphinx etc. In Upward Cat when coming up, simply look straight ahead instead of up to the ceiling so as not to stretch the belly too far. The release is still the same. Similarly, avoid strong twists that risk tearing ligaments. Instead, take knees side to side.
- As the belly gets bigger, bring a bolster or rolled up blanket to place under the belly with your pubic bones resting on it. You might also like to try placing a pillow across the chest as well. This takes the pressure off the belly in the prone postures. Lying in the 'Flapping Fish' pose (on your side with one knee drawn up resting on the floor) is a good alternative pose when on the belly. As you get bigger it might become too uncomfortable to lie on your belly at all.



- ◆ Breath of Fire is fine to do during pregnancy, but maybe for short bursts at a time. If it doesn't feel right for you, miss it out. It is also best not to hold the breath during pregnancy. If this is required in class, then simply breathe in and out, with nice deep breaths.
- Later on in pregnancy, perhaps around 22 weeks, it is a good idea to roll over onto your left side for a few moments every 15 minutes. This provides the placenta with fresh blood and oxygen. Lying on the back for too long can make you feel dizzy and nauseas, since the uterus can compress the *inferior vena cava*, causing the blood pressure to drop. If you do begin to feel dizzy, rolling onto your side regularly will alleviate this problem. Another option when resting on the back is to prop the right hip up with a small folded towel. Lying on the back can also cause shortness of breath due to a restricted diaphragm. To alleviate the pressure on the hips and lower back place a cushion or rolled up blanket under the knees for support, or lie on the side with a cushion between the knees. Raising the head and shoulders with a blanket or towel is also useful, especially if suffering reflux.
- ◆ If a movement feels uncomfortable for you, experiment with it until it feels right, or do another movement instead (your teacher won't mind!). Any posture which opens up the pelvis is invaluable during pregnancy. Butterfly (lying or sitting), Pelvic clock, having the knees apart and floating above the chest with the right hand on the inside of the right knee, left on left and taking each knee down to the side is another really nice movement in pregnancy. Or simply rest. Your body is doing enough work for you to justify this!

- ◆ Moolabhandha is the best technique for pelvic floor muscles. It increases the strength, and promotes greater awareness of these muscles which in turn can:
  - ⇒ prevent incontinence due to stress
  - ⇒ prevent hemorrhoids
  - ⇒ prevent prolapse (collapse) of pelvic floor muscles
  - ⇒ bring awareness to opening the cervix and birth canal for birthing
  
- ◆ It is not advisable to move into any squatting positions during the first 3 months. The foetus is wanting to 'settle in' and squats are too expelling. Instead, rest in Butterfly Pose (sitting or lying) with the soles of the feet together. Butterfly supported against a wall can be very useful to open the hips and relax the spine.



- ◆ During the later stages of pregnancy it is best not to sit in Vajrasana if prone to hemorrhoids. You can place a cushion or folded towel between the buttocks and the floor, which will give you a similar stretch with much more support.
  
- ◆ Working with the hips during pregnancy is excellent, however it is not a good idea to hold deep sharp folds at the hips for a long time, as this can stop blood flow. If you're resting with your legs up the wall, it is best to have your buttocks approx 20-30 cms away from wall.

# Common Ailments during Pregnancy

- ◆ **Backache**, often sciatica, occurs as the sacroiliac joint is compressed from the added weight in the belly. Additionally, the hormone *Relaxin* can overly relax the back support muscles.  
⇒ *What you can do:*  
*Practice all pelvic, lower back and hamstring releases and abdominal strengthening exercises. If you've already had sciatic problems before coming to class, it is not useful to do stretches for it. Rather, relieve the pain through rotating the joint inwardly using kneeling positions, and/or gently rocking over and massaging the buttocks. Try a heat bag on the pain spot after class.*
  
- ◆ **Nausea** (Morning Sickness) often occurs during the first few months. Make sure stomach has a small amount of food in it before coming to class, like fruit.  
⇒ *What you can do:*  
*At least eat something, as lowered blood sugar aggravates nausea.*
  
- ◆ **Heartburn** can occur with the change in the hormones during pregnancy. They can cause the cardiac sphincter to become too relaxed, allowing stomach acids to bubble up into the esophagus.  
⇒ *What you can do:*  
*Try propping mats under the shoulders or torso to create a slope with head up, or try sitting up doing variations of the postures.*
  
- ◆ **Swelling of hands and feet, or varicose veins** is due to poor fluid redistribution.  
⇒ *What you can do:*  
*Try resting with feet up on a chair or wall during relaxation. In the last trimester, keep hips at a wide angle (20-30cm) from the wall.*
  
- ◆ **Round ligament spasm** can occur to the ligament that connects from the corner of the uterus through the groin and pubic area. The ligament spasms, causing a sharp pain like a stitch, usually on the right side.  
⇒ *What you can do:*  
*Try bending over at the waist, practice Upward and Downward Cat, or just sit cross legged.*
  
- ◆ **Mood swings** can occur from the hormonal changes, inducing emotional states ranging from elation to depression. YogaHealth helps balance the endocrine/hormonal system and our body's reaction to it.  
⇒ *What you can do:*  
*Practice Alternate Nostril Breathing, and know that guided relaxation can be very centering.*

