



## **Yoga for Pregnant Women-A Practical Approach**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Pregnancy is a very special time in women's life and yoga provides the opportunity and tools to optimize the enjoyment of this miraculous period. Nature has given a great responsibility i.e., pregnancy to human body. Many couples become parents without much preparation for this important responsibility. Yoga in pregnancy is multidimensional; physical, mental, emotional and intellectual preparation to answer the challenges faced by a pregnant woman [1]. Yoga requires a mindful coordination of body movement and breath with a focus on self-awareness. The challenges of pregnancy are revealed by the state of happiness and stress while yoga is a skill to calm down the mind and relax the body. Pregnancy in a woman is a condition in which woman changes both from inside as well as outside. maternal prenatal anxiety is negatively associated with prelabour self-efficacy for child-birth and labour pain.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda; asanas; birth weight; pregnancy; pranayama; stress; yoga.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Yoga, an ancient science of holistic living has been used for centuries in stress reduction and

health promotion. Yoga is a term derived from the Sanskrit term "yuj" which means to merge or to unite. A healthy pregnancy is necessary to ensure the well-being on neonate. Child's mental

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and behavioral development starts in the womb as it can be influenced by the mother's emotional state during pregnancy [2]. Thus, a pregnant woman has to be given special care throughout the pregnancy. It is a process of educating the foetus in the womb, through a special effort taken to stimulate baby's sense gently from outside for the maximum development of its physical and intellectual ability. It influences the maternal experience of stress, anxiety, pain, discomfort, and other variables as well as on labour and birth outcomes [3]. Confidence, self-efficacy, and coping ability are considered important for a positive labour experience, and maternal prenatal anxiety is negatively associated with prelabour self-efficacy for child-birth and labour pain. Pranayama- breathing, also known as deep

breathing, is defined as a voluntary manipulation of breath movement and serves as the cornerstone of any yoga practice. Slow, deliberate, deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system mainly by stretching of pulmonary tissue and the vagal nerves [4]. Yoga is well indicated for pregnant women at a time in their lives when their hormonal, muscular, and psychological functioning undergo rapid change [5]. Maternal stress and anxiety during pregnancy is associated with a host of negative consequences for the foetus and it leads to complication for children later in life, such as the development of attention deficit hyper-activity disorder or lowered performance on aspects of executive function.

**Table 1. Yogasana in 1<sup>st</sup> trimester [6]**

Sr. No	Asanas (Posture)	Benefits
1.	Tadasana (mountain pose)	Stretches the entire spine and helps in developing physical and mental balance. It stretches and strengthens the rectus – abdominus muscle (accessory muscle) for bearing down.
2.	Trikonasana	Relieving pain and stiffness neck and shoulder joints. Strengthens the spine, hip joint, hand and palms. elives
3.	Veeerbhadrasana (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.
4.	Vrikshasana	It stretches the legs, back and arms, invigorates the body. It helps to improve concentration.

**Table 2. Yogasana in 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester**

Sr. No.	Asanas (Posture)	Benefits
1.	Katichakrasana (waist rotating pose)	Tones up the muscles of waist, back and hips. It induce the feeling of lightness and relieves physical and mental stress.
2.	Marjariasana (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 shoulder muscles which are essential for bearing down efforts during labour.
3.	Sukhasana	Relieves the stiffness of the joints. Beneficial on pelvic organ like uterus, urinary bladder.

**Table 3. Yogasana in 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester**

Sr. No.	Asanas (Posture)	Benefits
1.	Dandasana (Stick Pose)	Strengthens waist muscles. Stretches the leg muscle.
2.	Shavasana	Relax nerve and muscles in pregnancy. They gain strength and their normal health is restored
3.	Utthanasana (Squat and Rise pose)	Strengthens the muscle 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.

**Table 4. Pranayama**

S. No.	Pranayama	Benefits
1.	Nadi Shodhan Pranayama	It strengthens the body mentally as well as physically. During labour, holding of breath for maximum duration can provide great help for pushing during labour. It provides more oxygen to the body so more oxygen is transferred to the uterus.

**1<sup>st</sup> TRIMESTER YOGASANA**



**Fig. 1. Badhkonasana**



**Fig. 2. Trikonasana**



**Fig. 3. Tadasana**



**Fig. 4. Vrikshasana**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> TRIMESTER YOGASANA



Fig. 5. Marjariasana

Fig.6. Katichakrasana

## 3<sup>rd</sup> TRIMESTER YOGASANA



Fig. 7. Dandasana



Fig. 8. Utthanasana

## Pranayama



Fig. 9. Nadi Shodhana Pranayama

## 2. BENEFITS OF YOGASANA AND PRANAYAMA DURING PREGNANCY

*Yogasana* and *pranayama* help mother to remain calm, relax and reduces tension, stress both mental and physically [7]. *Asana* practice keeps the body flexible. It strengthens the pelvic floor muscles, improves quality of sleep, digestion and relieves constipation. *Yoga* helps reduce the pregnancy symptoms like morning sickness, pedal oedema, leg cramps and bodyaches. It helps in stabilizing the blood pressure and anxiety.

## 3. DISCUSSION

Yoga practices includes physical posture, breathing techniques which minimize the complication of pregnancy, like pre-term delivery,

intrauterine growth retardation, pregnancy induced hypertension. Antenatal *yoga* lowered state of anxiety and cortisol level, and *pranayama* practices relaxes the mind refocuses the energy, relieve stress. Many women would like to avoid pharmacological or invasive methods of pain management in labour [8]. *Yoga* is a noninvasive, economical, and easy-to-learn solution to improve the quality of life of pregnant women, Improve their abilities to perform their social roles, and potentially prevent adverse obstetrics outcomes.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda is a comprehensive and natural healing system that covers all aspects of our being, including mental, physical, emotional and spiritual [9]. In Sanskrit, *Prana* literally means

“life force” and our breath connects our mind to the body. So *pranayama* and meditation during pregnancy can help to calm the mind, relax the nervous system, alleviate headaches and soothe hormonal imbalance and emotions [10]. It also helps in improving digestion and sleep disturbances and high stress. Childbirth is a time of enormous stress for many women, especially for primigravida. Practicing *yoga* and *pranayama* along with meditation techniques can increase maternal comfort, pain threshold and decrease the duration of pain during labour. Thus it is a safe intervention for pregnant women as well as for foetal wellbeing and labour outcome.

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The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

### CONSENT

It is not applicable.

### ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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