



BODY MIND YOGA
PERTH

Pregnancy

Gentle yoga is a wonderful thing to do during pregnancy – in fact many women first start their yoga practice when they become pregnant. Not only does yoga keep the body healthy, reduce back problems associated with pregnancy, reduce stress and anxiety, but it also provides the time and space to become aware of and bond with the unborn baby. In addition to this, the postures and breathing exercises of yoga, provide optimum supply of blood and nutrients to the baby, and can assist with a natural delivery.

During pregnancy, it is a time to be gentle with yourself and to listen to your own body. The pregnancy hormone relaxin, can increase flexibility of muscles, so it is important not to over stretch and to move slowly.

Please note that we recommend that a yoga practice is only commenced after the first trimester (12 weeks) unless on the advice of a medical practitioner. Also, if possible find a prenatal class specifically for pregnancy, especially during the last trimester.

Pregnancy tips during class

What not to do

1. Never pull the tummy muscles in strongly or do any strong abdominal exercises such as leg lifts. Gentle abdominal exercises are fine.
2. Avoid stretching the belly too much. So when on all fours and moving into upward cat, go slowly and don't lift the head all the way up. Also avoid deep twists – preferably twisting more from the shoulder and back rather than from the waist.
3. Don't draw the knee into the chest from the all fours position – this has the slight risk of pushing air into the uterus.
4. Don't practice full shoulder bridge after the first 4 months. A gentle and slight lifting of the hips up and down from the semi supine position is fine – but don't lift up high into the full shoulder bridge position and definitely don't hold the posture.
5. Don't hold or strain the breath during pregnancy
6. In the early stages of pregnancy lying on the front will be fine, however as the pregnancy progresses, this will become uncomfortable. Resting in flapping fish pose is advised here – from the prone position, draw one knee up and rest it on the floor, with a pillow underneath for extra comfort, whilst keeping the other leg long.

What to do

1. Move gently and slowly during the class, only doing what feels right for your body. Rest whenever you feel to and simply watch your natural breath at the belly. This is a time to be gentle with yourself and take your attention within.
2. When lying on the back and drawing the knees into the chest, draw the knees more sideways to avoid pressing into the belly (especially as it gets bigger) – this way you will still get a nice stretch into the lower back and hips without squashing the belly.
3. Pelvic floor exercises are the most useful exercises you can do during your pregnancy – they will not only make the birthing process easier and reduce the risk of tearing, but also help support the baby during the later stages of pregnancy when a lot of pressure is placed on them. Keeping them strong will help prevent incontinence during and after pregnancy. So feel free to practice your kegel exercises when resting during the class. It is important that you are pulling up and tightening the pelvic floor muscles, rather than pushing down – if you are unsure about this then talk to your physiotherapist or midwife about it.
4. Lie on your side every 10-15 minutes later in the pregnancy (around 20 weeks). Although every person and every pregnancy are different, lying on the back for too long may cause you to feel dizzy or nauseous because the uterus may press on the inferior vena cava and therefore lower blood pressure. So rolling onto your side every so often or placing a small pillow or rolled up towel under the right hip will alleviate this issue.
5. When doing standing poses use a chair or wall for support. In the later stages of pregnancy your centre of gravity changes making balancing more difficult.
6. Flapping fish pose is excellent for relaxation. Not only is it comfortable, but it stimulates digestion and improves constipation.
7. Butterfly – sitting with the soles of the feet together is a wonderful preparatory pose for the birth.
8. Breathing and relaxation are wonderful to do during pregnancy. Simple awareness on the breath at the belly is calming and helps to connect with the baby. As you watch the breath at the belly you can also do the practice of smiling into the belly – sending loving happy feelings to the baby.

