

TYC Pregnancy Guidelines

Practicing yoga is wonderful during pregnancy but there are things to be aware of before rolling out your mat.

- **Share your news!** Please tell your teacher if you are pregnant and how far along you are. Also make them aware of any additional medical conditions (e.g. high blood pressure). It's always a good idea to check with your doctor or midwife before attending class, especially if you are new to yoga.
- **New to yoga?** Please attend the specific pregnancy class rather than beginners, general, restorative or Ashtanga classes if you can. We also suggest waiting until you are around 15 weeks before starting classes.
- **Been practicing a while?** If you're an experienced yoga practitioner, attending specific pregnancy classes will help you learn what's safe for you during the different stages of your pregnancy. If you can't get to these classes, please ask the teacher for a copy of the TYC guidelines and practice sheets.
- **Keep safe!** Our classes are designed for non-pregnant practitioners and while teachers will help as they can, please ensure you take responsibility for modifying and/or avoiding poses that are contraindicated with pregnancy. General guidelines and practice sheets are provided, but the final responsibility for your safety lies with you, not TYC or the teacher.
- **Teachers may use their discretion and not accept a pregnant woman into a class** if they think doing so could prejudice the safety of the woman /or the smooth running of the class.
- If you are nervous about or have **a history of miscarriage and/or you have become pregnant with IVF** then we advise not doing yoga until well into the second trimester and please be conservative in your practice after this.
- **Listen to your body.** Yoga is generally very helpful for pregnant women. However, during pregnancy some yoga poses are not advised at all and some poses should be done only with modifications. Please ensure you come out of the pose immediately if it feels uncomfortable for you or your breathing doesn't remain soft and natural.
- **Give the belly a rest.** It's very important the abdominal or belly region is not tensed, tightened or compressed while you are pregnant. Always try to create space between your rib cage and abdomen for your baby.
- **Be careful not to over-stretch!** When you're pregnant, the hormone 'relaxin' is present at higher levels than normal making it easier to over-stretch ligaments or tear muscles. Go easy on the stretches, pay attention to alignment and consider supporting your hips and groins (e.g., blocks or blankets under the thighs) in hip/groin openers.
- **Be gentle with yourself.** Don't be afraid to use plenty of props for support and if in doubt, ease off. Pregnancy is not the time to push your physical, mental or emotional limits.

POSES TO AVOID

- **Any pose where you are lying on your belly** e.g., Dhanurasana (bow pose), Salabhasana (locust pose)
- **Any pose where the abdomen is contracted or tensed** e.g., Urdhva Prasarita Padasana (supine leg lifts), Chaturanga Dandasana (plank pose), Paripurna Navasana (boat pose)
- **Any pose where the abdomen is or could be compressed** e.g., full forward bends, Supta Padangusthasana 1
- **Any twisting poses - whether seated or standing - where the abdomen is squeezed (i.e., "closed twists")** e.g., Parivritta Trikonasana and Parivritta Parsvakonasana (revolved triangle and side-angle poses), Marichyasana and Ardha Matsyendrasana (half Lord of the Fishes pose). Gentle, open twists (e.g., Bharadvajasana) are generally ok
- **Any pose that doesn't feel good or where the breathing doesn't remain soft and natural.**

POSES THAT CAN BE MODIFIED

- **Standing poses**
 - Do the pose against a wall or use a chair for extra stability, especially if you are a beginner
 - Place your bottom hand on a block to give more room for the abdomen and for stability
 - Step your legs apart and don't jump when coming into and out of the pose
 - Keep the legs hip width apart in Tadasana (mountain pose) for greater stability and to give more room
 - If you are a beginner, then omit them or do with caution in the first trimester
- **Forward bends (standing or seated)**
 - Only come to the "concave back" position so there is room for the baby. Going any deeper compresses baby.
 - Standing forward bends - place the hands on blocks or a chair; trunk not past parallel to the floor
 - Seated forward bends – concave back or forehead on a chair; have legs apart in Paschimottasana
- **Poses where you are lying flat on your back** can put pressure on a major vein, "inferior vena cava", particularly later in the pregnancy. Use support (e.g., bolster or blankets) under the back and don't stay too long. If there is any sign of nausea or dizziness do Savasana (corpse pose) on your side, legs bent
- **Vinyasa, jumpings or flow sequences** - avoid any fast or rapid movements. Slow down and step rather than jump

- **Inversions** (e.g., headstand, shoulder stand, handstand, forearm balance) – generally not in the first trimester and **only if you practiced these poses regularly prior to becoming pregnant**. Use a wall or chair for support.

RECOMMENDED POSES FOR PREGNANCY

Standing poses – step into them, avoid jumping. Not recommended for beginners in first trimester

- Tadasana (mountain pose) – feet hip width apart
- Trikonasana (triangle pose) – bottom hand on block, wall support preferable
- Parsvakonasana (side angle pose) – bottom hand on block, wall support preferable
- Ardha Chandrasana (half moon pose) – bottom hand on block, wall support preferable
- Parsvottanasana – concave back only, blocks for hands
- Virabhadrasana 1 (warrior 1) – only if experienced - hands apart, head straight forward, knee bent to less than 90 degrees
- Virabhadrasana 2 (warrior 2)
- Prasrita Padottanasana (wide legged forward bend) – spine parallel to floor, hands on blocks or chair
- Uttanasana (standing forward bend) – legs hip width apart, spine parallel to floor, hands on blocks or chair

Seated Poses

- Baddha Konasana (butterfly pose) – sit on a blanket, upright and/or back against wall, block or rolled blanket under each shin to prevent overstretching recommended
- Janu Sirsasana (head to knee pose) – concave back i.e., upright
- Paschimottanasana (full forward bend) – concave back i.e., upright, feet hip width apart
- Upavistha Konasana (legs wide apart) – sit on a blanket, torso upright and/or back against wall
- Virasana (hero pose) – knees can be up to hip-width apart to allow room in the abdomen
- Bharadvajasana twist (simple open twist with legs to side) – on floor or chair
- Open twists in Virasana (hero's pose) or in Swastikasana (simple cross-legged pose)

Supported Supine Poses

- Supta Baddha Konasana (reclined bound angle pose)
- Supta Virasana (reclined hero pose)
- Passive, supported backbends e.g., cross bolsters

Inversions

- Viparita Karani (legs up the wall) – sacrum on bolster slightly away from wall
- Setu Bandha Sarvangasana – blocks or bolster supporting sacrum and/or spine
- Sirsasana (headstand) – first two trimesters if practiced regularly before pregnancy. Use wall
- Sarvangasana (shoulder stand) and Halasana (plow pose) – first two trimesters if practiced regularly before pregnancy. Use chair in second half of pregnancy
- Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana (back bend through a chair) – first two trimesters if practiced regularly before pregnancy

Other poses

- Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog) – head supported on bolster, feet wider apart than normal to give room for baby
- Ardha Uttanasana (half forward fold) – legs apart, hands on stool or wall, torso parallel to floor
- Malasana (deep squat) – back against wall – second and third trimesters
- Savasana (corpse pose) – support the spine on blankets or a bolster in earlier stages of pregnancy or practice on the side in later stages

Pranayama (breath work)

- Breath observation
- Ujjayi breathing – extended / controlled inhalations and exhalations
- Viloma breathing – Interrupted inhalations or exhalations (e.g., inhale, pause, inhale, pause, inhale pause then similar for exhalation).