



# Yoga in Pregnancy: Trimester-Wise Evidence based Yoga Protocol for Pregnant women

Greeshma Menon<sup>1</sup>, Simi. C. P<sup>2</sup>, Athulya P K<sup>3</sup>, Krishnamurthy N<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Shalakyatantra, JSS Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Mysore, Karnataka, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Rachana Sharir, Shree Dharmasthala Manjunatheswara College of Ayurveda and Hospital, Hassan, Karnataka, India

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Roganidana Evam Vikriti Vigyan, Yenepoya Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka, India

<sup>4</sup>Head of Department, Department of Rachana Sharir, Shree Dharmasthala Manjunatheswara College of Ayurveda and Hospital, Udupi, Karnataka, India

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## KEYWORDS

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## ABSTRACT:

Yoga during pregnancy is a transformative practice that enhances the physical and mental well-being of expectant mothers. Prenatal yoga offers numerous advantages, such as improved flexibility, better posture, stress reduction, and increased relaxation. It also strengthens the body and prepares it for childbirth. This paper explores the significance of Yogasanas during pregnancy and their positive impact on maternal health and the overall pregnancy experience. Emphasis is placed on the importance of safe, tailored yoga routines for pregnant women, in accordance with established health guidelines

**INTRODUCTION :-** Pregnancy is a unique and transformative phase that requires prioritizing both maternal and fetal well-being. Yoga, an ancient holistic practice, has been widely recognized for its benefits during this period. Prenatal yoga supports physical health by improving flexibility, posture, and muscle strength. Additionally, it promotes mental well-being through stress reduction, relaxation, and mindfulness<sup>1</sup>. This paper investigates pregnancy-friendly yoga practices, emphasizing safety, necessary modifications, and breath awareness to foster calmness and focus. It also examines how prenatal yoga positively influences labor and delivery and provides practical tips for integrating yoga into pregnancy routines<sup>2</sup>. This article presents a trimester-wise guide to safe yoga practices during pregnancy, grounded in both modern medical recommendations (notably from the American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, or ACOG) and the timeless wisdom of yogic philosophy<sup>3</sup>.

## AIM & OBJECTIVES

- To understand the principles and applications of Garbhasthapana Yogasanas (prenatal yoga postures).
- To examine the potential benefits of Garbhasthapana Yogasanas in facilitating positive birthing experiences.
- To explore mindfulness and relaxation techniques incorporated in Garbhasthapana Yogasanas for reducing maternal stress

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

A systematic search was conducted using electronic databases including PubMed Central and Google Scholar. Keywords such as "Yogasanas," "Prenatal," and "Garbhasthapana" were used to identify relevant literature. Peer-reviewed articles, yoga textbooks, and clinical guidelines were included without restrictions on language, geographic region, or publication date<sup>4</sup>.



## DISCUSSION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>5</sup> and various maternal health bodies, physical activity during pregnancy should be encouraged with proper modifications. However, intense or new yoga practices are generally discouraged during the first trimester due to increased risk of miscarriage and sensitivity in early pregnancy. The second and third trimesters allow more adapted and safe yoga practices focusing on gentle stretching, strengthening, and relaxation<sup>6</sup>.

### Why Practice Yoga During Pregnancy?

When practiced mindfully and with appropriate modifications, prenatal yoga can:

- Improve posture and reduce common discomforts like back pain
- Enhance physical strength and flexibility<sup>7</sup>
- Support breath control and relaxation<sup>10</sup>
- Prepare the body and mind for labor<sup>3</sup>
- Reduce stress, anxiety, and enhance emotional well-being

Medical studies and systematic reviews consistently demonstrate that physical activity during uncomplicated pregnancies is associated with a reduced risk of gestational diabetes, gestational hypertension, and cesarean delivery. Additionally, regular exercise contributes to improved postpartum recovery and overall maternal health outcomes. These findings support the integration of safe, modified physical activity such as prenatal yoga as part of routine prenatal care.<sup>2</sup>

### FIRST TRIMESTER ASANAS

#### First Trimester: Focus on Rest and Awareness (0–12 weeks)

Avoid inversions, closed twists, and back bends that may compress or overly stretch the uterus, leading to reduced blood circulation. The first trimester is a crucial and delicate phase, and generally, strenuous physical activities, including new yoga postures, are not

recommended. Emphasis should be placed on gentle breathing exercises and meditation to promote mental well-being and this phase is delicate; the embryo is implanting, and hormonal shifts are intense. Fatigue and nausea are common<sup>6</sup>

**Focus:** Gentle, restorative poses; cultivate body awareness and emotional balance.

#### Practice:

- Supported poses (using blocks, bolsters)
- Gentle hip openers like Baddha Konasana (Butterfly)
- Restorative seated or lying poses such as Vajrasana
- Relaxation and Yoga Nidra
- Gentle, non-forceful breathing (avoid Kapalabhati, Bhastrika)

#### Avoid:

- Deep twists, strong backbends, abdominal pressure
- Inversions and forceful core work
- Overheating or hot yoga

### SECOND TRIMESTER ASANAS

#### Second Trimester: Gradual Introduction to Safe Yoga Asanas

**Second Trimester (13–27 weeks):** Strength and Postural Alignment Often the “honeymoon” trimester—energy rises, but the growing belly shifts balance. This trimester is considered the safest period to practice prenatal yoga, with appropriate modifications.

Focus: Strengthen legs, glutes, and core (without compression); improve posture.

**Precautions:** Avoid lying flat on the back for prolonged periods to prevent reduced uterine blood flow; use props for support; avoid deep twists and excessive stretching.<sup>6</sup>



## Recommended Asanas:

### 1. Vajrasana (Thunderbolt Pose)

- **Mode of Action:** Improves digestion and pelvic blood flow.
- **Benefits:** Relieves hyperacidity and enhances energy absorption.

### 2. Marjariasana (Cat Pose)<sup>8</sup>

- **Mode of Action:** Increases flexibility of spine and neck, strengthens pelvic muscles.
- **Benefits:** Prepares muscles for labor and relieves back pain.

### 3. Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose)

- **Mode of Action:** Tones pelvic muscles, improves hip flexibility.
- **Benefits:** Aids digestion and relieves mental stress when combined with meditation.

#### Practice:

- Modified standing poses like Virabhadrasana (Warrior), Utkatasana (Chair), avoiding forced 90° angles
- Side stretches and gentle twists (chest-level only)
- Seated forward bends with wide legs and belly support
- Breath control with Ujjayi pranayama

#### Avoid:

- Lying flat on the back for extended periods (due to aortocaval compression risk)
- Poses with high fall risk or sudden balance challenges
- Deep abdominal crunches or core contractions<sup>9</sup>

## THIRD TRIMESTER ASANAS

### Third Trimester: Emphasis on Comfort and Relaxation (28 weeks+)

In the third trimester- Pelvic Openness and Relaxation; the focus shifts to maintaining comfort, preparing for labor, and fostering mental calmness.<sup>6</sup>

**Precautions:** Avoid poses that exert pressure on the abdomen, prone positions, deep forward bends, and intense backbends.

**Focus:** Pelvic flexibility, gentle hip openers, and mental calm.

#### Recommended Asanas:

##### 1. Dandasana (Staff Pose)

- **Mode of Action:** Strengthens spinal muscles, supports posture.
- **Benefits:** Helps prevent back pain

##### 2. Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclining Bound Angle Pose) with support

- **Mode of Action:** Opens hips, stretches inner thighs, and increases birth canal flexibility.
- **Benefits:** Promotes relaxation and rejuvenates the body.

##### 3. Sukhasana (Easy Pose)

- **Mode of Action:** Supports meditation and breath awareness.
- **Benefits:** Reduces anxiety and strengthens the maternal-fetal<sup>7</sup>

Focus shifts to preparing the body and mind for labor, with emphasis on comfort and ease.

#### Practice:

- Hip openers like Malasana (Garland Pose), supported Butterfly, and wide-legged seated stretches



- Gentle side bends and supported forward folds
- Meditation, chanting, and relaxation techniques
- Avoid lying fully on the back

**Avoid:**

- Strenuous, deep backbends or forward folds
- Any pose causing discomfort, dizziness, or strain

Safety First: Evidence-Based Medical Guidelines<sup>6</sup>

## Integrating Yogic Philosophy into Prenatal Yoga

While medical guidelines emphasize physical safety, the yogic tradition adds depth through practices that address the emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of pregnancy. Incorporating classical yogic philosophy can help create a more holistic prenatal experience.

**Kosha Model:** According to yogic teachings, the human being is composed of five layers (koshas), with the Vijnanamaya kosha representing the sheath of wisdom and intuition. During pregnancy, mindfulness practices and Yoga Nidra can help the mother deepen awareness of her inner self and the developing life within, fostering a calm and conscious connection with the baby.

**Santosha (Contentment):** One of the Niyamas from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, Santosha encourages acceptance and inner peace. Practicing with contentment helps the expectant mother release the pressure to "achieve" in asanas, and instead embrace the present moment with gratitude and ease.<sup>5</sup>

**Pranayama and Chanting:** Gentle breathwork (such as Ujjayi or Anulom Vilom) and mantra chanting can support emotional balance, regulate the nervous system, and reduce cortisol levels. These practices foster a serene internal environment, which is beneficial for both mother and fetus.<sup>6</sup>

## According to ACOG Committee Opinion No. 804:

- Moderate-intensity exercise for 20–30 minutes on most days is safe in uncomplicated pregnancies.
- Avoid exercises lying flat on the back after mid-pregnancy to prevent blood flow issues.
- Avoid high-risk activities with potential for falls, abdominal trauma, or overheating (e.g., hot yoga).
- Modified yoga and Pilates are considered safe with adaptations.
- Avoid postures that cause abdominal pressure or compromise venous return.

By combining these yogic principles with modern medical guidelines, prenatal yoga becomes a multidimensional practice that supports the body, mind, and spirit throughout pregnancy<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

Yoga during pregnancy, when practiced mindfully and with appropriate modifications, offers a holistic pathway to support maternal health. Beyond physical benefits such as improved posture, flexibility, and strength, prenatal yoga fosters emotional stability, reduces anxiety, and enhances mental well-being during this transformative period. Research supports its safety and effectiveness in uncomplicated pregnancies, especially when aligned with evidence-based guidelines.

While the first trimester requires caution and rest, the second and third trimesters present opportunities for gentle strength-building, relaxation, and labor preparation. Integrating ancient yogic principles—such as the kosha model, pranayama, and Santosha—with modern medical guidance creates a comprehensive prenatal care approach. However, it remains essential for all pregnant individuals to consult healthcare professionals



before beginning or modifying any yoga practice. A mindful, trimester-wise approach to Garbhasthapana Yoga nurtures both body and mind, preparing the mother for a healthy pregnancy and empowered childbirth

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