



GUIDELINES FOR PRENATAL YOGA PRACTICE

There are many benefits to practicing prenatal yoga. At the same time, it is important to remember that your body is undergoing many changes, and that it needs your attentive support. Please keep in mind the following guidelines for practicing prenatal yoga safely.

1. **Don't to push yourself too hard.** You should be able to easily carry on a conversation during any form of prenatal exercise. Pushing yourself past your limits or overexerting yourself can limit oxygen to you and your baby, and increases risks of injuring ligaments or joints, falling, or fainting.
2. **If you are tired, rest.** Dizziness, nausea or lightheadedness are all signs to decrease intensity or rest.
3. **Do not "overheat" your body.** Building excessive body heat is not healthy for your or baby. If you are pregnant, avoid exercise that makes you sweat profusely or feel hot or flushed.
4. **Stay hydrated.** Have a bottle of water with you in class and during other types of exercise.
5. **Maintain comfortable blood sugar.** Pregnant women often need to snack frequently in order to maintain blood sugar levels. Light snacks are welcome in class and can be nice to have for after your workout.
6. **Protect your joints.** Extra care is needed not to strain joints during pregnancy, especially when stretching. Women experience a loosening of ligaments during their second and third trimesters due to increased production of the hormone "relaxin." Ligaments are tissues that hold the bones together at joints (e.g. knees, hips, elbows, etc). When ligaments are loose, as in pregnancy, they are at risk of overstretching, and destabilizing or injuring your joints. Always stretch in supported positions, and gently. Look for the feeling of stretch to be in the center of the muscle, and not near the joints. Never press your body into deep poses or force your joints into uncomfortable positions.
7. **Avoid compressing your uterus.** To avoid creating pressure in the uterus when bending forward, bring the thighs wider than the belly rather than directly in front of it. Twists should be performed gently and never against a leg or prop that will increase the pressure.
8. **Take care when doing abdominal exercises.** During pregnancy, certain types of abdominal exercises should be avoided (others are quite helpful!). Do not lie on your back to do abdominal "crunches" or leg lifts. This can lead to a separation of the abdominal muscles (diastasis recti), which can cause back pain, injury or other problems. Healthy abdominal exercises help keep your abdominal muscles strong for back support during pregnancy as well as for effective pushing in the second stage of labor and postpartum healing. Safe positioning is essential when doing any form of abdominal exercise. Exercises will be taught in class, and involve forward leaning or upright positions.
9. **Avoid strong abdominal stretches and all deep backbends.** Abdominal muscles stretch naturally throughout pregnancy as the baby grows in size. It is best to avoid positions that further stretch the abdominals to stretch in any significant way. This can cause ligament or muscle strain, or diastasis recti. Gentle backbends are safe if the stretch sensation remains in the chest or groin/thigh areas.
10. **Transition safely from lying to sitting.** When coming off the floor, avoid sitting up directly from lying on your back. Instead, always turn onto your side first, leaving your head on the floor, and then push yourself up with your arms. Reverse this to lie down.
11. **Use supports for balancing poses.** Your balance will be challenged as your body and center of gravity shift throughout pregnancy. The use of stabilizing props (chairs, walls) will allow you to adjust to these changes while preventing falls.
12. **Trust yourself and trust your body.** Always ask if you have questions about the appropriateness of a particular pose. If you feel that something is not right for you or your baby, even if you can't explain why, do not do it. Learning to respond to your intuition and body's cues is an important part of practicing prenatal yoga.
13. **Breath**

SUPPORTS + RESOURCES



Open Circle is committed to helping families connect to supportive practitioners and resources for pregnancy, birth and parenting. If you are looking for supports or resources that we do not provide at the studio, please let us know! We work closely with many other professionals in the field and would like to help you find what you are looking for.

Common referrals we make:

- Medical providers and birth locations with a commitment to family centered care
- Therapists Specializing in Care for:
 - expecting and new families
 - families who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss
 - families with a history of trauma
 - families struggling with life stress, anxiety, depression
 - families working with relationship challenges
- Breastfeeding / Lactation Support
- Fertility / Conception Support
- Community Support Groups and Peer-to-Peer connections
 - abortion, miscarriage and loss support
 - single parenthood support
 - LGBTQ+ families support and resources
 - father's support groups
 - resources for young parents
- Parenting Education and Support
- Wholistic Health Providers, including:
 - chiropractors, cranio-sacral therapists
 - physical therapists, osteopaths
 - acupuncturists, herbalists
 - naturopaths, homeopaths
- Advocacy and Social Service Organizations
 - housing supports
 - heat and utility support
 - visiting nurse programs for pregnant and postpartum families
 - domestic safety
 - recovery support for drug and alcohol dependence
 - cash assistance, WIC, SNAP

Pregnancy, childbirth and new parenting are important transitions in life. They can be times of beautiful growth and connection to joy. They can also be times that we feel deeply vulnerable, and where experiences may feel overwhelming or profoundly challenging.

This time can be especially intense for the many women and families who have experienced some kind of pregnancy loss (termination, miscarriage, fetal or infant loss). It can be similarly challenging for those with a history of life trauma or loss.

Many of the practitioners at Open Circle have experience working with the wide variety of transitions and transformations families experience. Please don't hesitate to contact us to discuss resources for your family.