

Modifications for Pregnancy Yoga

*Always seek medical advice first if you are concerned about your health.

In order to keep mother and baby safe, there are some conditions which I cannot allow in class:

- Pre-eclampsia
- Placenta Previa
- Vaginal Bleeding
- Please wait until your 12 week scan before attending your first class.

General Pregnancy Handy Hints

Connective Tissue and Ligaments

Pregnancy hormones stimulate lengthening and laxity in the ligaments and other connective tissues. For this reason, it is important not to over-stretch because you might find you are stretching the ligaments/connective tissue instead of the muscles.

Posture

Pregnancy causes postural changes. This can cause tightness in the following areas:

- The hip flexors
- The lower back/ upper buttocks
- The quadriceps
- The chest muscles
- The internal rotators and elevators of the shoulders
- The back of the neck

Stretching these areas can alleviate the tension in these areas.

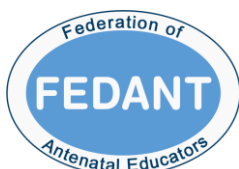
Postural changes during pregnancy can cause weakness in the following areas:

- The gluteus maximus
- The hamstrings
- The abdominals
- The lower trapezius (mid-back)
- The external rotators of the shoulders
- The pelvic floor muscles
- The intercostal muscles (muscles between the ribs)

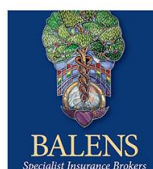
So strengthening these areas can help to support the body.

Adopt the neutral spine position as much as possible, particularly during core strength and stability exercises.

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Pelvic Floor Exercises

The pelvic floor muscles:

- Support the internal organs
- Maintain urinary and bowel continence
- Support sexual functioning
- Bolster the organs during activities that stress them physically, such as laughing, sneezing and coughing.

As baby grows, the muscles of the pelvic floor are under more pressure. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the pelvic floor. This will also help to prepare you for delivery and can encourage faster recovery in the post-natal period.

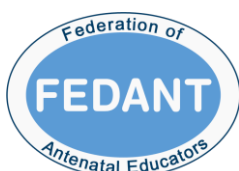
Optimal Foetal Positioning and Occiput Anterior

Baby's position can make birthing easier or more difficult. When baby is in the optimal foetal position, this can support a less-complicated delivery. Certain asana can support optimal foetal positioning, although it is important to note that this is not an exact science. Pregnancy Yoga aims to create space for baby and encourages the baby's heavy spine to drop down into the front of mother's belly so that the baby moves into the Occiput Anterior position. In the later stages of pregnancy, we also work on helping baby's head to nestle down further into the cervix; this can help to gently stretch the area and promotes natural stimulation of labour. Keep in mind that, during the birth, baby's position can change at the last minute. Please note, if baby is breech, it is important not to do exercises that encourage the baby's bottom to nestle further into the cervix because this can cause baby to move even further into the incorrect position.

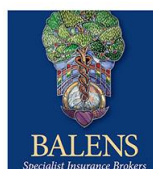
Breech

Many babies move into all sorts of positions during early pregnancy; this is not a problem. However, as we get closer to baby's due date, it is important to encourage baby to turn into a head-down position, the 'Occiput Anterior' is what we are aiming for. In order to do this, we can practise asana which create space, giving baby room to move and encouraging the spine to drop forwards into the front of the belly. After 34 weeks, do not practise positions and movements which will cause baby's bottom to nestle further into the cervix. For more information, see spinningbabies.com and talk to your midwife, who might perform an ECV.

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Dehydration

While pregnant, it is important to stay hydrated; nutrients and oxygen are carried to baby via the blood stream. Please bring a drink with you. At the end of class, I will provide a cup of tea (caffeine-free, pregnancy-friendly) to ensure mothers leave class hydrated.

Body Temperature Changes

An increase in basal body temperature can be one of the first hints of pregnancy. Increasing the mother's core temperature can be harmful to the baby's development so exercise regimes that greatly increase a mother's core temperature are not appropriate. My yoga classes are carefully designed to avoid too much heat. Be conscious of the clothing that you choose to wear to class.

Metabolic Rate

Basal metabolic rate increases while pregnant; in other words you need to eat more nutrients to keep mother and baby healthy. I recommend a light, healthy snack 30 minutes before class and ensure you re-fuel with healthy food after class.

Specific Concerns during Pregnancy

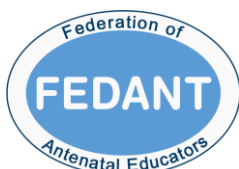
Knee Pain

As the pelvis widens, the angle from the pelvis to the knees changes, which can cause pain in the knee joints. Knee pain can also be caused by the surge of hormones that causes the ligaments to loosen; strengthening muscles around the knee can support this.

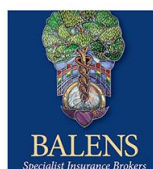
Handy Hints:

- The knee is a hinge joint. Only move it backwards and forwards.
- Use props to support the knees, for example, during baddha konasana (cobbler's pose) place blocks under the knees.
- In kneeling positions, place blankets under the knees.
- Strengthen the muscles around the knee joints.
- Keep the feet, knees and hips aligned.

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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is pressure on a nerve in your wrist.

Symptoms:

- an ache or pain in your fingers, hand or arm
- numb hands
- tingling or pins and needles
- a weak thumb or difficulty gripping

Golden Rules:

- It might feel fine during class then hurt the next day so it is important to use modifications
- Avoid putting weight on the wrists

Handy Hints:

- Try using fists or fingertips (this could still be too much)
- Try leaning on forearms on the floor, a chair or against the wall.
- Chest openers
- Shoulder openers, e.g. arm against the wall
- Tricep stretch using strap

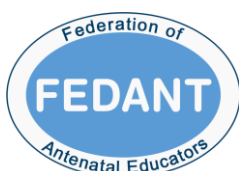
Nausea and Fatigue

These are common symptoms during pregnancy but, nonetheless, can be very difficult. Fatigue can be caused by low iron levels so ensure that you check this with medical professionals and adjust your diet accordingly. During pregnancy, pushing through tiredness is sometimes a necessity but finding opportunities to rest is important for you and baby.

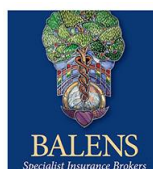
Handy Hints:

- Keep the head raised; in head down positions try resting on blocks, a ball or against the wall.
- Avoid rotations; keep the gaze fixed.

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Pelvic Pain in Pregnancy (including Pelvic Girdle Pain – PGP and Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction -SPD)

Symptoms Include:

- Discomfort at the centre of the pubic bone (the pubic symphysis)
- Discomfort across one or both sides of the lower back (the sacroiliac joint)
- Discomfort in the area between the vagina and anus (perineum)
- Discomfort can also radiate to the thighs and some women feel or hear clicking or grinding in the pelvic area

Golden Rules:

- Avoid balancing on one leg
- Avoid hip openers
- Avoid wide leg stances (narrow the stance to mat-width)

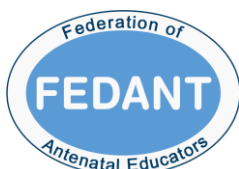
Handy Hints for Every Day:

- Be as active as possible within the limits of the PGP discomfort
- Wear flat, supportive shoes
- Rest wherever possible
- Sit down to get dressed, i.e. do not stand on one leg when putting on trousers/shoes etc.
- Keep the knees together when getting in or out of the car
- Sleep in a position which feels comfortable to you; a pillow between the legs helps many women
- Take the stairs one at a time

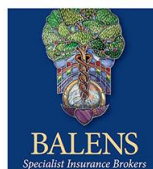
Handy Hints during Yoga:

- Strengthen the gluteal muscles
- Strengthen the psoas
- Strengthen the pelvic floor (placing a block/rolled up blanket between the thighs and squeezing in and up is a good option)
- Chair yoga
- Keep the stance narrow (no wider than a yoga mat)
- Shift the focus to upper body movements (opening the heart, strengthening the upper back and releasing the back of the neck)
- Instead of low lunge, kneel up
- Instead of baddha konasana put legs straight (mat width)

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High and Low Blood Pressure

High blood pressure during pregnancy isn't always dangerous. However, it can sometimes cause complications during pregnancy. As a woman progresses in her pregnancy, her blood pressure might change because the amount of blood in a woman's body increases and the blood vessels widen to allow for this. In order for the heart to support the increased blood volume, the left ventricle (left side of the heart) becomes thicker and larger.

High Blood Pressure Symptoms

High blood pressure is not always noticeable; your medical professionals should frequently check it.

Low Blood Pressure Symptoms

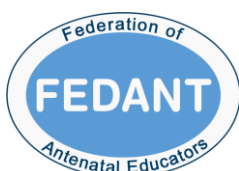
Symptoms:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Feeling faint
- Cold, clammy skin

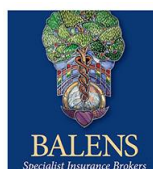
Handy Hints for High or Low Blood Pressure

- When you move your limbs away from the medial line (the centre of your body) it causes the circulatory system to work harder.
- Avoid raising arms above the heart.
- Keep movements small and close to the medial line.
- Stand up slowly; take a moment to breathe when changing positions, particularly when coming to standing.
- Avoid taking the head below the heart; for example, try resting the head on blocks when in extended child's pose.

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