

Is Yoga Safe During Pregnancy?



Yoga is an ancient mind and body practice that helps one achieve overall harmony through stretching and strengthening, yoga poses, breathing exercises, and meditation. Prenatal yoga is a popular activity for pregnant women because it's a low impact way to exercise and strengthen the body during pregnancy.

Different Types of Yoga

Not all types of yoga are the same though. In fact, there are hundreds of different types of yoga in existence, and the safety of yoga during pregnancy greatly depends on which type of yoga you're doing. The most common types of yoga found in western culture are:

Hatha

This is the most common type of yoga and is often considered a “gentler yoga,” which makes it perfect for pregnant women or beginners. It consists of basic movements and poses, coupled with methodical breathing.

Bikram/Hot Yoga

Bikram is also known as “hot yoga” because it’s usually done in a room heated to over 100 degrees with 40% humidity. It’s similar in style to Hatha yoga, with the exception of being done in a really hot environment.

Vinyasa

Vinyasa yoga consists of a series of movements that flow together smoothly into each other without pause. In Vinyasa yoga, each movement is performed in coordination with the breath.

Lyengar

This type of yoga incorporates the use of props like yoga blocks, straps, and balls. The movements in Lyengar yoga can be strong and they are very precise.

Prenatal Yoga vs Traditional Yoga

Prenatal yoga is a great way to maintain a healthy mind and body because it focuses on poses specifically for pregnant women to increase strength and flexibility. Prenatal yoga is slightly different than traditional yoga practices because it places more focus on parts of the body that are affected by pregnancy like the lower back, hips, pelvic floor, and the muscles between the ribs.

Is yoga safe for pregnant women?

Whether or not your yoga routine is safe during pregnancy highly depends on which type of yoga you're doing. Bikram yoga, or any other type of yoga that is practiced in hot environments is **not recommended for pregnant women**. [Studies indicate](#) that expectant mothers should not put themselves in any environment that may raise their body temperature, regardless of what trimester they're in, because it can heighten the chance of neural tube defects and the possibility of other malformations.



Pregnant moms should refrain from Bikram or Hot Yoga.

Most other forms of yoga, though, can be deemed as safe during pregnancy. In fact, prenatal yoga can be a key component to a happy and healthy pregnancy. It can help your labor and delivery go smoother, and even help your body's muscles bounce back into its pre-pregnancy form quicker. It also can help alleviate some of the body aches and pains associated with pregnancy.



Prenatal Yoga Classes

The easiest way to ensure your safety is to take a prenatal yoga class taught by an experienced prenatal yoga instructor. A prenatal yoga class is made up of breathing practices, gentle stretches and poses that work to support your body and your baby. It can be a great way to relax, meet other moms, and learn to move your changing body safely.

Prenatal yoga isn't just a class of pregnant women doing yoga together. Instead, prenatal yoga is led by an instructor trained to tailor to the physique and specific needs of moms-to-be.

Prenatal yoga can increase the strength needed for the later stages of pregnancy as well as for childbirth itself; you'll work to strengthen your lower body, and become familiar with poses that can be useful during labor.

Yoga is also a great way to practice intentional breathing. By taking full 'belly breaths' in through your nose you'll develop techniques that you can use during labor and the more stressful times that you're sure to face throughout parenting! Mindful breathing can be particularly helpful if you're suffering from shortness of breath during your pregnancy.



Should You Avoid Any Yoga Poses?

Floor-based and supporting poses are a key element of any prenatal yoga class but you'll want to avoid certain yoga postures, such as those that require you to lie on your stomach, or any deep twists. Your prenatal yoga instructor should know about these limitations and cater the class to suit you. The hormone 'relaxin' is every yogi's best friend during pregnancy and is released to relax your muscles and ligaments to allow your body to make room for your baby, as well as grant the baby an easier passage into the world. This hormone will also increase your flexibility, but try not to stretch over what you believe to be your normal limit as this can cause damage.

Prenatal Yoga is a Healthy Option for Expecting Moms

Practicing yoga can have many benefits during pregnancy, whether you're an experienced yogi or complete beginner, you'll find that it can help to relieve many of the more uncomfortable aspects of pregnancy. Prenatal yoga is a great way to help relieve lower back pain and the general discomfort caused by your rapidly growing belly, through the practice of poses that stretch the neck and decompress the spine you can help to relieve headaches and feel more relaxed in your body.

If searching for a class that is suitable for you during pregnancy, prenatal and hatha and are favorable choices. If ever in doubt of the safety of yoga while pregnant, make sure that you discuss your attendance at any yoga class with your healthcare provider beforehand, and that you always listen to your body. Be realistic about what your body is capable of at your stage of pregnancy and be sure to pace yourself.

