



***Yoga* practices in different trimesters of pregnancy: A synergistic approach to improve the quality of life and minimize pregnancy associated complications**

Dr. Yatendra Kumar Sethi¹ Dr. Gurpreet Kaur Gill² Dr bhanu pratap singh³ Dr. C.R. Yadav⁴

PG scholar, PG department of Kriya Sharir, National Institute of Ayurveda Jaipur¹

Assistant Professor, PG department of Kriya Sharir, Saint Sahara Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Kot Shamir, Bathinda, Punjab²

Assistant Professor, PG department of Kriya Sharir, National Institute of Ayurveda Jaipur³

Associate Professor & HOD, PG department of Kriya Sharir, National Institute of Ayurveda Jaipur⁴

Abstract

Ayurveda, being science of life, prioritize in maintaining the health of healthy individual by the aid of *Ahara*, *Rasayana* and *Yoga*. In recent era, *Yoga* practices gain so much popularity among people. Everyday more and more people are jumping on the bandwagon of doing *Yoga*. Many research studies suggest that *Yoga* ushers towards a healthier life style. It provides flexibility and support to the body and also keeps the mind relax by alleviating stress. *Yoga* is not restricted to only physical health but also modifies mental and spiritual health. Therefore, it is helpful in maintaining all components of health. It is observed that majority of *Yoga* practitioners are women. But *Yoga* is not exclusive for only non-pregnant women. Pregnant women can also practice *Yoga* poses with proper assistance and guidance. Pregnancy brings about many physical, psychological and behavioural changes which may lead to stress in women. *Yoga* will help in enduring all these changes and provide strength to pelvic floor muscles. Thus, *Yoga* can improve quality of life of women during their antenatal and postnatal period.

Keywords: *Yoga*, physical health, mental health, stress, pregnancy.

Introduction

During pregnancy, there is progressive anatomical, physiological and biochemical changes not only confined to the genital organs but also to all systems of the body. This is principally a phenomenon of maternal adaptation to the increasing demands of the growing fetus. These changes in the body of a pregnant woman, particularly changes in the physical appearance may lead to development of anxiety and stress. Moreover, anatomical changes may increase physical burden. By adopting *Yogic* regimen, a pregnant woman can achieve dual benefits of *Yoga* as it improves the quality of life of both mother as well as fetus by alleviating all sort of physical and psychological stress. Additionally, it also facilitates a healthy puerperium period which may further helpful in reverting back of genital organs to their normal non-pregnant state.

Aim of practicing *Yoga*

- To ensure the healthy and complication free antenatal period.
- To avoid fetal complication.
- To facilitate the normal labour.
- To ensure healthy postpartum period.

Benefits of *Yoga* in pregnant women

1. *Yoga* during pregnancy boosts blood flow to brain which will help in relaxing the mind and promote sound sleep.
2. *Yoga* helps in reducing stress which is the main reason of hormone fluctuations during pregnancy.
3. *Yoga* is known to improve bone strength and flexibility which is very important for preparing the body to go into labour.
4. *Yoga* postures help in lessening the structural burden and eventually reduces lower back pain.
5. It also helps in reducing nausea and headaches.
6. It reduces the chances of preterm labour.

Yogic* practices for different trimesters of pregnancy*Table 1: *Yoga* for 1st trimester**

1.	Relaxing series	Head to toe loosening exercise
2.	Standing series	<i>Ardha Katichakrasana</i> <i>Ardha Chakrasana</i> <i>Trikonasana</i> <i>Parshva Konasana</i> <i>Virabhadrasana</i> <i>Urdhva Hastasana</i> <i>Vrikshasana</i>
3.	Sitting series	<i>Dandasana</i> <i>Vajrasana</i> <i>Veerasana</i> <i>Supta Veerasana</i> <i>Bhadrasana</i> <i>Marjariasana</i> <i>Gomukhasana</i> <i>Bhardwajasana</i>
4.	Prone series	<i>Bujangasana</i>
5.	Supine series	<i>Matsyasana</i> <i>Shavasana</i> <i>Setubandhasana</i>
6.	<i>Pranayama</i>	<i>Nadi Shuddhi Pranayama</i> <i>Bhramari Pranayama</i>
7.	<i>Mudra</i>	<i>Ashwini Mudra</i> <i>Vajroli Mudra</i>
8.	<i>Bandha</i>	<i>Moola Bandha</i>

Table 2: Yoga for 2nd trimester

1.	Relaxing series	Head to toe loosening exercise
2.	Standing series	<i>Ardha Katichakrasana</i> <i>Trikonasana</i> <i>Parshva Konasana</i> <i>Veerabhadrasana</i> <i>Vrikshasana</i> <i>Ardha Chandrasana</i>
3.	Sitting series	<i>Dandasana</i> <i>Vajrasana</i> <i>Ardha Ushtrasana</i> <i>Baddha Konasana</i> <i>Upavishta Konasana</i> <i>Veerasana</i> <i>Supta Veerasana</i> <i>Marjariasana</i> <i>Gomukhasana</i> <i>Bhardwajasana</i>
4.	Supine series	<i>Matsyasana</i> <i>Supta Baddhakonasana</i> <i>Vipreetkarani</i> <i>Matsya Kridasana</i> <i>Setubandhasana</i>
5.	<i>Pranayama</i>	<i>Nadi Shuddhi Pranayama</i> <i>Bhramari Pranayama</i>
6.	<i>Mudra</i>	<i>Ashwini Mudra</i> <i>Vajroli Mudra</i>
7.	<i>Bandha</i>	<i>Moola Bandha</i>

Table 3: Yoga for 3rd trimester

1.	Relaxing series	Head to toe loosening exercise
2.	Standing series	<i>Ardha Katichakrasana</i> <i>Trikonasana</i> <i>Virabhadrasana</i> <i>Urdhva Hastasana</i> <i>Vrikshasana</i>
3.	Sitting series	<i>Vajrasana</i> <i>Baddha Konasana</i> <i>Marjariasana</i> <i>Upavishta Konasana</i>
4.	Supine series	<i>Matsya Kridasana</i> <i>Setubandhasana</i>
5.	<i>Pranayama</i>	<i>Nadi Shuddhi Pranayama</i> <i>Chandrabhedhi Pranayama</i> <i>Chandra Anuloma-viloma Pranayama</i> <i>Sheetali Pranayama</i> <i>Sadanta Sheetali Pranayama</i> <i>Sheetkari Pranayama</i> <i>Bhramri Pranayama</i>

6.	<i>Mudra</i>	<i>Ashwini Mudra</i> <i>Vajroli Mudra</i>
7.	<i>Bandha</i>	<i>Moola Bandha</i>

Precautions during *Asana* practice

- *Yoga* should be practiced empty stomach.
- Pregnant women should practice *Yoga* in presence of an attendant and a qualified *Yoga* instructor.
- Mat should be of high quality and of perfect grip.
- Maintaining final posture is not mandatory for all pregnant ladies.
- All postures can be done with prop also.
- The postures which increase intra-abdominal pressure should be avoided.
- In *Pranayama*, *Kumbhaka* should never be practiced by pregnant women.

Discussion

Ardha Katichakrasana

Benefits:

- It gives good stretch to both sides of muscle around uterus.
- It also provides flexibility to the vertebral column and prevent backache during pregnancy.
- It also has positive impact on thyroid gland.ⁱ
- It tones the muscles around abdomen, hips, and waistlines.
- It improves the function of the liver.

Precautions:

- It should not be done by the pregnant women having problem with knees, hips or shoulders.

Urdhva Hastasana

Benefits:

- It encourages the opening and expanding of the ribcage and heart. The enlargement of the chest allows to take deep breath that increases oxygen flow in the body.ⁱⁱ
- It tones the back muscles.
- It improves the functions of the abdominal organs, especially digestive organs.
- It calms the brain by increasing oxygen flow in the body.ⁱⁱⁱ

Precautions:

- This *Asana* should be avoided in diseased conditions like backache, shoulder pain and neck injury.

Trikonasana

Benefits:

- It strengthens the legs and improves the blood circulation to lower extremities.
- It ensures that growing fetus gets all the nutrients by improving the circulation of oxygen and nutrient rich blood flow.
- By improving blood circulation, it promotes the elimination of toxins from body.

Precautions:

- This *Asana* should always be practiced just next to the wall or with a chair beside for instant support in case of losing body balance.^{iv}

Parshva Konasana

Benefits:

- It helps in strengthening of the legs and reduces swelling in ankles and feet.
- It helps to open groin and hamstring muscles which will support the lower back and prepare hips for anticipating labour.

Virabhadrasana

Benefits:

- It strengthens the muscles of legs, arms and shoulders and back while stretching calves, upper body and psoas.

Vrikshasana

Benefits:

- Primarily, it is a balancing pose which is important for improving sensory motor functions.
- This *Asana* helps in improving concentration which helps a pregnant woman in understanding of her symptoms.

Precautions:

- Balance become more challenging in later months of pregnancy due to loosening of ligaments which is caused by hormone relaxin. So, in later months this *Asana* should be practiced with help of support.

Dandasana

Benefits:

- *Dandasana* prepares body for different types of other *Asana*.
- It gives strength to spine.

Precautions:

- This *Asana* should not be practiced in case of wrist and spine related injuries.
- If there is problem in doing this posture, then one should use back support.

Vajrasana

Benefits:

- It relieves backache which is a common complaint in pregnancy.
- It helps in improving digestion.
- It is the only *Asana* which can be practiced after meal.
- It improves blood circulation in pelvic region and makes thighs stronger^v.

Precautions:

- It should not be practiced in case of knee and ankle injury.

Ardha Ushtrasana

Benefits:

- It gives strength to chest and lower back muscles.
- With the expansion of chest, it increases oxygen concentration in blood.
- It relieves the lower back ache which is common problem during 2nd and 3rd trimester of the pregnancy.

Precautions:

- In 2nd and 3rd trimester, this *Asana* should be practiced in presence of an attendant.

Veerasna

Benefits:

- It improves the tone of the muscles of thigh.
- It helps in increasing blood circulation around thigh and knee.
- It improves the lung capacity by increasing tonicity of muscles of chest.^{vi}

Precautions:

- It should not be practiced in case of knee and ankle injury.

Upvishta Konasana & Baddha Konasana

Benefits:

- They strengthen the pelvic muscles including the lower back, spine and sacrum.
- They improve the blood circulation in pelvis and abdomen.
- They can be helpful in reducing the labour pain.

Precautions:

- In later months of pregnancy, they should be always practiced with wall support.

Supta Veerasana

Benefits:

- It increases flexibility and relieves pain of thigh and knee.
- It reduces abnormal swelling of leg.

Precautions:

- It should not be practiced in last month of pregnancy.

Bhadrasana

Benefits:

- It improves flexibility in the hip and groin region and stretches the thigh and knee.
- It alleviates fatigue.
- This *Asana* facilitates smooth delivery when practiced until late pregnancy.

Marjariasana

Benefits:

- It stretches the neck and shoulder and keeps spine flexible. This is useful because the back has to support more weight as the pregnancy advances.
- It tones the abdominal region.
- It improves the blood circulation ensuring that the reproductive organs are well nourished.

Gomukhasana

Benefits:

- It relieves the pain and swelling of the leg which are the common complaints during pregnancy.
- By compressing the leg, it stimulates the blood circulation in leg.
- It counters the shoulder slump due to increased weight in the front body by inviting expansion of chest.^{vii}

Precautions:

- In case of sciatica, it should be practiced with the help prop under the hips.^{viii}
- Avoid this *Asana* in case of serious neck, shoulder and knee problem.^{ix}

Bhardwajasana

Benefits:

- It gives the good stretch to hips, spine and shoulder.
- It improves the digestion and metabolism by giving gentle massage to abdominal organs.
- It gives strength to lower back and relieves back ache.
- It reduces stress and anxiety.

Precautions:

- It should not be practiced in case of headache, diarrhea and high blood pressure.

Bhujangasana^x

Benefits:

- It gives strength to lower back.
- It improves the mood.
- It increases overall flexibility.

Precautions:

- It should not be pushed too much and hold more than 30 seconds.

Matsyasana^{xi}

Benefits:

- It opens up the hips and stretches abdominal wall.
- It relieves the stress on back with a small back bend.

Precautions:

- It should not be performed without close observation of an experienced Yoga teacher.
- It should not be performed in case of serious neck and lower back injury, migraine and insomnia.

Setubandhasana

Benefits:

- It stretches the chest, neck and spine and strengthens the leg.
- It keeps the brain calm and alleviates stress.
- It cures insomnia.

Precautions:

- This *Asana* should be practiced very carefully by a pregnant woman. It should not be practiced with full force.
- Both legs and feet should be parallel.
- It should be avoided in neck, shoulder and spinal injury.

Vipreetkarni

Benefits:

- It stimulates the nervous system.
- It improves blood circulation.
- It relieves backache and depression during pregnancy.
- It decreases the symptoms of morning sickness.

Precautions:

- It should be practiced with wall support in the presence of an attendant.

Shavasana^{xii}

Benefits:

- It relieves the stress and enhances sound sleep.
- It is a relaxing posture which should be practiced only in 1st trimester of pregnancy.

Matsya Kridasana

Benefits:

- It gives mental as well as physical relief during 2nd and 3rd trimester of pregnancy.

Precautions:

- Over exertion should be avoided.
- Avoid practicing this *Asana* in case of severe neck and back pain.

Conclusion

These *Yoga Asana* improve the movements of respiratory muscles, myocardium and abdominal muscles thereby facilitating proper functioning of the respective organ and system. With the improved exchange and transport of respiratory gases, blood circulation and digestion of food, the pregnant woman will not experience conditions like hypoxia, dyspnea, cyanosis, loss of appetite and indigestion. Moreover, *Yoga Asana* also strengthen the skeletal muscles and spine, thus, provide flexibility to the body by virtue of which body can easily endure the strain and physical stress at the time of labour. If a pregnant woman practices *Yoga Asana* religiously, she can be significantly benefited with marvelous perks of different *Asana*. Despite being the numerous benefits of *Yoga*, proper training, utmost care and supervision is necessary to avoid any complication or mishap.

- ⁱ Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-417
ⁱⁱ Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-414
ⁱⁱⁱ Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-414
^{iv} Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-418
^v Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-412
^{vi} Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-425
^{vii} Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-398
^{viii} Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-398
^{ix} Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-398
^x Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-399
^{xi} Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-401
^{xii} Dr.Vijay Kumar Rai, Swasthviritta Vigyana (Yoga Evum Nesargopchar), 2010, Chaukhmba Publication, New Delhi, Pp-404

