

Routine One

Gentle postures for use anytime during pregnancy or postpartum.

Centering and Warming Up

Start by spending a few moments tuning into your breath and letting go of the thoughts of your day and your plans for the future. Spend these moments being aware of your breath, aware of the complete duration of each inhale and exhale. It is not necessary to deepen your breathing, just be aware of your breath and breathe comfortably. Then spend about 5 minutes doing warm-ups for the neck and joints of the hands, shoulders, feet, hips and spine. These warm-ups can include half-neck rolls, shoulder shrugs, ankle rolls as well as massaging your hands and feet.

The Postures

1. Belly Breathing

Sit in a comfortable position with your back against a wall or a sofa for support. Inhale, expand and relax your belly. Exhale and pull belly toward spine hugging your baby. Continue for 5 – 10 breaths.



2. Mama Cat & Child's Pose

This is a variation of the classic cat/cow exercise. Take care not to arch your lower back in this exercise since the lower back and abdominal muscles are already under stress from the growing uterus. The focus is on a back and forth motion and stretching the muscles of the upper back and hips rather than the traditional focus of rounding and arching the lower back. This posture can help ease lower back and round-ligament pain and has been known to encourage a posterior facing baby to turn.



1. Come to an all-fours position with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Inhale and rock forward just a bit so your shoulders come slightly forward of your wrists.
2. Exhale and rock back so your hips move over your calves, bring your chin towards your chest and spread your shoulder blades wide a part.
3. Continue this movement back and forth with your breath, inhaling as you move forward and exhaling as you move back.
4. After several rounds you can rest in a modified Child's pose by bringing your toes together, taking your knees wider than your belly and resting your hips back over your feet. (Postnatal women may prefer traditional Child's Pose with knees together.)



nurturing mother, nurtures the child

3. Tailor Sitting

This exercise is a variation of the Cobbler, or "Bound Angle" as it is called in yoga-speak. It is a hip opener but can also help to strengthen the muscles of the outer hips and to relieve pubic joint pain. It is a great position to sit in to practice breathing. (Postnatal women may prefer to skip this posture.)



1. Come to a seated position (you may sit against a wall or sofa for added back support). Place the soles of your feet together. Let your knees fall out to each side.
2. Draw your feet as close to the pelvis as comfortable.
3. Gently press your knees toward the floor, hold for 3 breaths.
4. Relax for a couple breaths.
5. Contract your seat muscles and notice if knees move slightly closer to the ground.
6. Hold this contraction and take a few breaths.
7. Slowly release the contraction and notice if the legs stay in this open position. Remain in this seated position for the pelvic floor exercises.

4. Pelvic Floor Exercises

A strong pelvic floor is beneficial in childbirth and beyond. To practice a "kegel" most effectively; first tighten the muscles of the pelvic floor as if you were trying to hold back a bowel movement, follow this by tightening the muscles that you would use to hold back urine and then slowly relax these muscles. Continue this back to front tightening 5 times. Try these other variations:

- A. **Pulsing:** Breathe naturally as you quickly tighten and release these muscles, as fast as possible. Continue for 30 seconds to 1 minute.
- B. **Lifting:** Inhale as you tighten the pelvic floor muscles; slowly exhale as you release them. Perform 5 sets.
- C. **Postnatal Exercise:** (Similar to Lifting, reversing the breathing) Inhale as you relax the belly and pelvic floor. Exhale and lift the pelvic floor. Perform 5 sets.

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5. Cow Face Posture

This posture is great for relieving low back and sciatica pain, it stretches the arms and shoulders and helps to correct and improve your posture.

1. In a seated position, cross your legs, bend your knees and pull feet back towards hips, stacking your knees.
2. Check to be sure that both sitting bones are on the floor, if they are not or if this causes knee pressure then the bottom leg can be straight.
3. Raise one arm and drop your hand down your back.
4. Reach around with other hand and try to clasp fingers, if they do not meet you can use a strap or scarf.
5. Keep top arm/elbow pulled in along side your head.
6. Let your neck muscles relax by pressing your head back against your top arm.
7. Hold for 3 breaths then repeat on opposite side, switching both arms and legs.

6. Cat & Bird Series

This series of postures helps to open the pelvis by stretching and releasing specific muscles in the hips, low back and thighs. Practice all 3 postures on one side then repeat them on the other side.



1. Begin on all fours. Rock back and forth in the Mama Cat posture for a few breaths.
2. Bring one knee forward between your hands and slide the other leg straight back behind you for the Pigeon posture.
3. Check to be sure that your back knee is pointed straight in to the ground and not rolling to one side or the other.
4. If it is comfortable you can fold forward over your thigh. Feel free to adjust your front leg to accommodate your belly as long as the back knee stays pointing towards the floor.
5. Rest in the Pigeon posture for 3 breaths.
6. Place your hands under your shoulders and arch up giving your belly a gentle stretch.
7. Raise your hips then roll to the hip of the forward knee.
8. Bring your back leg around in front of your body and sit in a one-leg- stretching position.
9. You may use a strap to aid in this stretch. Hold for a couple breaths and then repeat this series on the other side, starting with Mama Cat.

8. Lion Posture

The Lion posture helps to release aggression and tension that is stored in the body. Come to sitting on your heels. (If this is not comfortable, then any sitting position will work). After a deep inhale you lean forward and let out a roaring exhale through the mouth while sticking your tongue out and rolling your eyes back in your head. Perform this posture 3 times in a row. Pausing if you experience dizziness or lightheadedness.



9. Inversion

For this posture you will need a couple firm blankets or pillows and a chair. Rest with your calves in the seat of a chair or on a sofa. Place blankets under your hips and lower back so that your hips are raised at least 8 inches or so. This inversion helps to relieve tired legs, varicose veins and swelling. Some women use this posture to help encourage their breech babies to turn. Rest here for several minutes, or as long as it is comfortable. Allow your breath to be soft and try to clear your mind by paying attention to your breath. (Postnatal women should not elevate the hips for the first 6 weeks or as long as they have lochia flow, traditional Stick Pose with hips on floor is fine.)



10. Final Relaxation

Final Relaxation may very well be the most beneficial part of any yoga practice, as it energizes and restores your body integrating all of the work done in the previous postures.



1. Rest on your left side, and prop your head, leg and belly with pillows and blankets.
2. Begin by scanning your body for any areas of tension then imagine this tension leaving the body with each exhale.
3. Try to relax your toes, abdomen and tongue at the same time.
4. If your mind begins to wander then bring your attention back to your breath.
5. Take this time to share anything you want to with your baby.

If you have questions about any of these postures please contact a certified prenatal yoga teacher. Mamaste Yoga™ salutes the mother in all of us and nurtures the mother who nurtures the child. Mamaste!