



Basic, supportive Prenatal asana variations

For the most part, if a mama had a regular asana practice pre-pregnancy, she can continue to practice in the way she's accustomed to as long as she feels comfortable doing so. This means that while you absolutely want to be prepared to offer suggestions and support to mamas, there's no need (for example) to insist that a student practice a side-lying shavasana if she's perfectly comfortable lying on her back (more on this later), or to freak out if an advanced student decides to press up into *urdhva dhanurasana* (upward bow) or indulge in a **brief** handstand at the wall.

Pregnancy is not the time to learn challenging asanas like these, and for almost all pregnant people, big backbends and hand-balancing won't feel awesome after a certain point (which means it's time to stop doing them). While there are certainly some general guidelines to adhere to, modifying a practice for pregnancy isn't about enforcing a rigid list of do's and don'ts.

Make Space for Baby

As pregnancy progresses, many asanas can start to feel restrictive and uncomfortable. Solution? Think "make space for baby" when you offer pose variations and alternatives. Avoid or modify poses that compress the belly like deep forward folds where there may be a compression of the belly. This might mean that you offer a prop or two (like blocks under hands in a standing forward bend or lunge) or suggest a wider stance.

You always want to think about space and comfort for mom.
It's all about creating space and expansion.

Avoid lying on the bellies (especially after the first trimester). In place of belly backbends like *bhujangasana* (cobra) or *shalabhasana* (locust), offer similar-ish poses that can be done on all fours, like cow or opposite arm/leg extensions.

Avoid Compressive "closed" twists—. Deep visceral twists are contraindicated as our focus is on expansion. i.e., twisting toward the front leg side (in an asymmetrical standing twist like a lunge), or the bent leg side (in a seated twist like *ardha matsyendrasana*)—should be avoided for the same reason. Offer "open twists" to mamas instead. This basically means "twist in the direction opposite to that of everyone else." Pregnant students should also focus on opening up through the chest as they twist, not twisting from the belly.



* Always use props

NOTE: PREGNANCY IS A NATURAL HYPOGLICEMIC STATE, make sure they eat a light snack before class and keep hydrated drinking plenty of water.

IF THEY EXPERIENCE palpitations, dizziness, nausea, have them lie down on their LEFT side until recovered.

General prenatal Yoga Poses

Sitting in comfortable position using bolster or blanket

Pranayama: Pranayama practices involving breath retention (*kumbhaka*) should be avoided during pregnancy (as should powerful practices like *bhastrika* and *kapalabhati*). Remind pregnant students to breathe smoothly, evenly, and continuously, and suggest *nadi shodhanam* (alternate nostril breathing) or *bhramari* (bumble bee breath)—which are both wonderful to practice all through pregnancy.

CAT/COW: if wrists hurt: rolled up mat (WONDEFUL POSITION X LABOR!)

CHILDS POSE: open knees wide , give space for baby (great x labor!) Use a BOLSTER or pillow for 3 trimester

SUN BIRD: OPPOSITE LIMB EXTENSION

GATE POSE

SIDE PLANK w/ knee down

VAJRASANA- knees open- USE BOLSTER or BLOCK under buttocks so they don't compress blood vessels of the legs. You can show all arm & neck warm ups here

DOWN DOG- EXAMPLE USING BELT great for SCIATIC PAIN

CHATURANGA

Encourage them to practice these poses with their knees on the floor, which will be more stable and supportive for their lower backs. (And it goes without saying that lowering all the way to the floor in *chaturanga* should be avoided!)

SUN SALUTATIONS - Using blocks and lowering to knees

STANDING

TADASANA- legs open hip distance apart or more



WARRIOR I & II & III- no heel to center of the foot alignment- pregnant women need balance, so wider stand . Always remember distance between legs!

STRADDLE is great for pregnancy as well as sumo squats. To come out of straddle, ALWAYS heel/toe/ heel/toe, no jumping, and to come up always have them INHALE and maybe PAUSE so they don't faint!!

TRIANGLE pose- use a block

SQUATS- (offer bolster!!) pelvis opens 28% more when you squat during pregnancy!!

TOES TURNED OUT

Modification: SQUAT against the wall with bolster

BALANCING POSES:

Offer mamas the option to use the wall, especially beginner yogis.

GARUDASANA- Foot to side instead of around calf for belly space

STANDING SPLIT gets pretty uncomfortable!!

SITTING/KNEELING

STRADDLE- block in center, elbows on block or bolster

BRIDGE POSE- May put a bolster underneath sacrum to hold pose longer. Helps baby turn into position!!

PACHIMOTTANASANA with BELT- legs wide- no forward fold- present spinal extensions as a forward-bend alternative (such as *dandasana*)

CAMEL POSE w/ pillow behind hands

INVERSIONS:

In general, if inversions feel good, students can continue to practice them, but it is a good idea to avoid inverting near the end of the first and beginning of the second trimester (weeks 10-13), when the placenta is attaching to the uterine wall. Pregnant students should also avoid inverting for long periods of time (stick with 30 seconds or less). If you're teaching long holds in inversions, a supported bridge pose (with a yoga block under the sacrum) with feet on the floor or legs in the air, is a great pregnancy-friendly alternative for most students.

Good x varicose veins, swelling, lowers blood pressure, gets baby off the pelvis

GO TO THE WALL!

SHOULDER STAND- in 3rd trimester USE THE WALL! If pressure in eyes, neck chest, come down

PLOW POSE ONLY WITH WALL BEHIND or CHAIR- nice release for lumbar area

VIPARITA KARANI w/ bolster under lower back



RELAXATION:

SHAVASANA : lying flat on the back for an extended period of time can compress the **inferior vena cava** (an important vein which returns deoxygenated blood from the lower body back to the heart). When this happens, it tends to be pretty uncomfortable, and it's not very likely that your student will want to remain on her back (which she shouldn't).

LEFT SIDE LYING Always mention shavasana alternatives when mamas are present and encourage them to honor their bodies and to change positions if they start to feel nauseous, dizzy, or uncomfortable.

A block, bolster, blanket, or pillow between the knees may help make this position more comfortable, and resting the head on a pillow or folded blanket, hugging a pillow bolster, or covering up with a blanket are other ways that you can make side-lying extra cozy and supportive.

SUPINE COBBLER POSE: For the incline variation, elevate the far end of a bolster with a yoga block or two, her head is above her heart. A bolster or rolled blanket under the knees can feel especially nice here, and may help to relieve lower back discomfort.

Ask before you place anything over the eyes (like eye pillows or aromatherapy), pregnant women are more sensible and might not like it, especially in the 1st trimester.

Yoga poses to avoid or offer modifications

Revolved side angle- supported side angle is best

Bow pose- do Camel instead

Chaturanga to Upward dog w/ blocks

Cobra – Upward dog w/ block

Forward fold- wide legged forward fold

Twisted chair- wide leg chair with a heart open (arm up)

I hope you enjoyed this class and that it cleared up any concerns you've had about prenatal yoga and provided you with useful tools to teach pregnant mamas safely in your classes.

If you have any questions, please email me .