

Make **space** in your life for your pregnancy

No doubt you already realize that you will have to re-arrange your priorities once your baby is born. However, the best time to start is right now. Making a baby requires a lot of energy, but our energy is limited, especially if we lead busy lives. That energy must come from somewhere and therefore, since Nature ensures that your baby comes first and gets all it needs to develop, it is vital that you conserve and boost your own energy levels. Yoga conserves energy by reducing stress through deep relaxation and boosts it by increasing your oxygen uptake through yogic deep breathing and movement.

get the yoga habit now

Yoga will stand you in good stead right through your pregnancy, after your baby is born and for the rest of your life. You will soon be hooked on the sense of well-being that it brings. Your daily session can be quite short, as long as it is regular, and many yoga techniques can be incorporated into daily life. As you become more aware of your posture, emotions, thoughts and attitudes, you will want to adjust them, whatever you happen to be doing and wherever you are.

learn to nurture yourself

Many women feel that they should hide their feelings, ignore their needs, always appear strong and independent and keep going, no matter what. But you must learn to stop, relax and nurture yourself. Only when you know what it feels like to be loved will you have the capacity to nurture the life in your womb and care for a tiny baby. Practise being vulnerable and learn to ask for help and support from your loved ones.

CAUTION

Whether or not you have practised yoga before, keep it very easy and simple for the first 14 weeks of your pregnancy. Focus on breathing and relaxation rather than movement.

15 Feet up the wall sequence

This relaxing sequence rests tired legs and lower back, while stretching the muscles in the groin and preparing the muscles of the pelvic floor. Meanwhile, practise slow, deep breathing with awareness.



△ 1 Sit with the legs along a wall. It is best to bend the inner knee, lean back on the hands and then forearms, and swivel your bottom round before raising the legs.



△ 2 Swivel your upper body round and straighten your legs against the wall – buttocks and legs should touch the wall. Place a cushion under your head.



△ 3 Place your hands under your head with elbows on the floor, to open up your chest. Breathe deeply for a few moments.



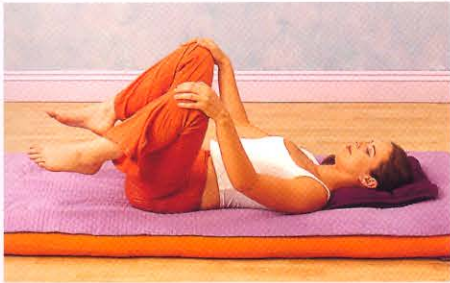
△ 4 Take your legs comfortably apart to release tightness in the pelvis and groin. Gently massage the inner thighs while breathing deeply.



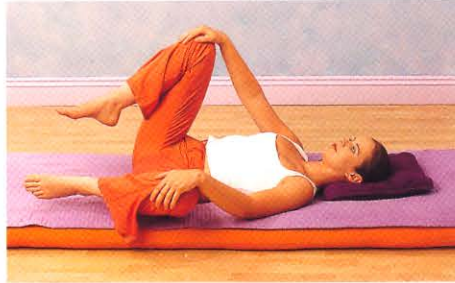
◁ 5 Bend your knees and slide the soles of your feet down the wall, a comfortable width apart. Place your hands over your lower abdomen and become aware of your pelvic floor muscles. Draw in the muscles as you breathe in, and release the tension gently as you breathe out. Repeat several times.

16 Lying down stretches

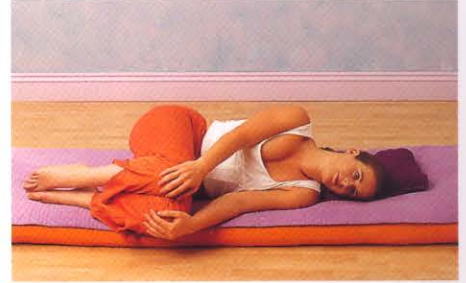
A similar exercise helps to relax the pelvic region for conception but it is just as effective here, where the point of focus is the lower back. The lumbar region of the spine, the sacrum and the coccyx should all relax against the floor – quite easy when the knees are bent and pulled gently toward the chest. If muscular tension prevents the lower spine from softening in this position, take long deep breaths out to relax more fully. The gentle movements will further ease your lower back and remove any stiffness or soreness.



△ 1 Lie on your back with your spine long and chin down. Keeping your coccyx on the floor, take one bent knee in each hand. Bring your knees toward your chest then gently circle them out to the sides to massage your lower back against the floor. This is a great way to release backache. Repeat several times.



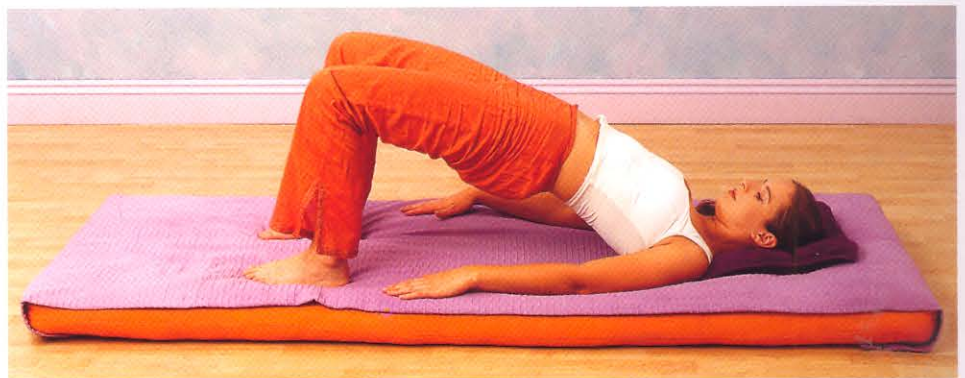
△ 2 Gently bring one knee toward the floor. As far as possible, make sure that both shoulders remain relaxed and your back stays flat against the floor. Keep your neck relaxed and breathe deeply.



△ 3 Breathe out as you roll on to one side, bringing your knees together. Relax in this position and breathe deeply. Breathe in to roll on to your back, raising first one knee and then the other, or both together if you can. Repeat on the other side.

17 The bridge pose

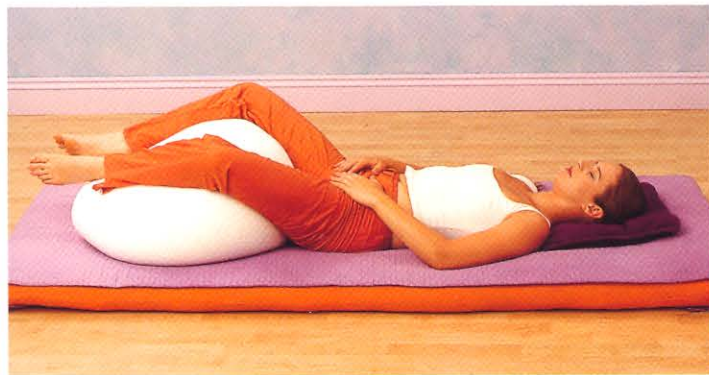
This pose strengthens the leg muscles, especially the inner thighs, which helps you to support the extra weight of your baby as the pregnancy progresses. The Bridge Pose also stretches the muscles around the groin area, opens the chest and frees the diaphragm for deeper breathing. Alternate this exercise with the previous one so that you both relax and strengthen the lower spine and abdominal muscles. This will bring awareness and energy to the whole area.



△ Place your feet flat on the floor near your buttocks, about hip-width apart. Stretch your arms alongside your body, palms down, for support. Breathe in and raise your pelvis off the floor. Breathe deeply a few times in this position. Slowly lower your buttocks to the floor on a long breath out. Repeat several times.

18 Deep relaxation with focused breathing

Leave enough time so that you can end every yoga session with deep relaxation. It quickly dissolves any stress that may have built up, removing muscular tension and congestion and bringing new energy to all the body's systems.



△ 1 Lie on your back with your spine long and chin down. Drape your legs over a beanbag or a pile of cushions, with knees bent out to the sides. Bring your heels close together and relax your feet.



◁ 2 Place your palms over your lower abdomen, thumbs touching. Breathe deeply, and feel which is the best hand position to soothe you and bring nourishment to your baby. Close your eyes and relax.