

Prenatal Yoga

By Paola Feher

Whether you are an expectant mother or a yoga teacher you may wonder: what is special about yoga practiced during the nine months of pregnancy? How does it differ from any other kind of yoga practice? Why do it?

Prenatal yoga is helpful before, during and after the birth of the child:

- *It can help mitigate common discomforts that are typical of the pregnant condition, such as back pain, muscle cramps, fatigue, digestive upset, stress and overheating.
- *It helps prepare the mother-to-be for childbirth, preparing the pelvis, learning to relax and control breathing, promoting general muscle tone, and bonding with the baby in utero.
- *It strengthens the mother-to-be so she's better able to deal with the lifting and bending and the multitude of new tasks she will need to do when the baby is born.

A practice for an expectant mother should follow these general rules:

In the first trimester, the practice is gentle, since this is medically the riskiest of the 3 trimesters. It is best to do the yoga poses "dynamically", that is, moving in conjunction with the breath and not staying in, or holding the pose steady for any length of time. This is the time to establish a firm connection

between the movement and the breath. This connection lays the foundation for the deeper poses in the 2nd trimester.

In the 2nd trimester, women generally feel better, and can begin to work more on endurance and strength both in the body and in the breath. Particularly good for this trimester are standing poses that are held stationary while breathing

In the 3rd trimester, fatigue sets in and the poses must become simpler because breath and movement become impeded by the growing belly. Ligaments begin to loosen, so care must be taken not to overstretch any area, in particular the pelvis.

These, of course, are general guidelines. The expectant mother's experience, as well as her lifestyle and activities prior to the pregnancy will dictate how closely these guidelines are followed.

The following photos illustrate some poses that are useful for the pregnant mom-to-be. Please read each section for more information.

NOTE: *There are some definite contraindications for yoga poses in pregnancy, including but not limited to: inversions, deep twists, and lying on the*

belly. Please consult a knowledgeable yoga professional before starting this or any other yoga practice during pregnancy. Paola can be reached for consultations at: www.bozemanhealingarts.com, or 586-7529.

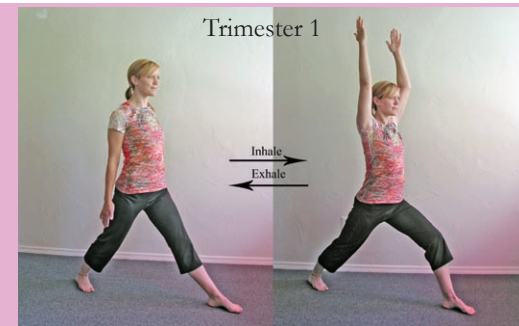
Paola Feher founded Bozeman Center for the Healing Arts in 1997 after receiving her master's degree in biomechanics. Her training emphasizes observation of human bodies in motion, focusing on performance, injury prevention and rehabilitation. Paola is currently certified by the Yoga Alliance (E-RYT 500). Paola specializes in the treatment of chronic pain and injury rehabilitation. She can be contacted at www.bozemanhealingarts.com.

Backbends strengthen the spine in preparation for postural support of the big belly up front. They also create space between the belly and the diaphragm; this alleviates the common shortness of breath from compression as the belly grows.

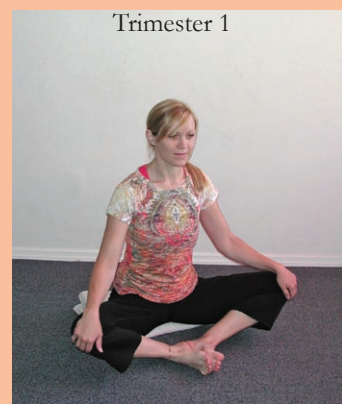
In trimester 1: backbends are done dynamically paying special attention to the breathing pattern.

In Trimester 2: poses are held static with attention to breathing.

In Trimester 3: backbends are done using the wall as support.



Pelvic openers are important to prepare the body for childbirth. Trimester 1 and 2 are the same pose, at a depth that is comfortable for the mom. Trimester 3 is a reclining passive variation.



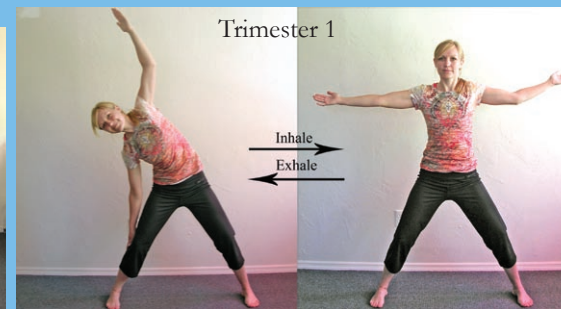
Working on the lateral muscles of the torso opens the side of the body. This decompresses the lower back to alleviate low back pain, and it also opens the spaces between the ribs allowing



better breathing.

As before, in Trimester 1: the poses are done dynamically.

In Trimester 2: the same poses are held or they are replaced by the shown pose



which is much deeper.

In Trimester 3: using a wall for support, the pose can be either dynamic or static.

