

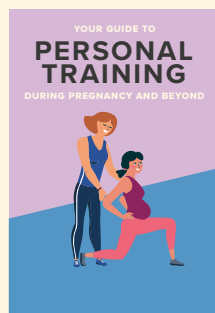
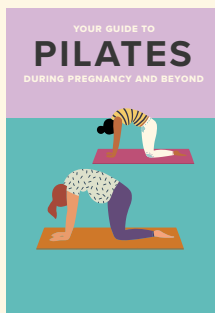
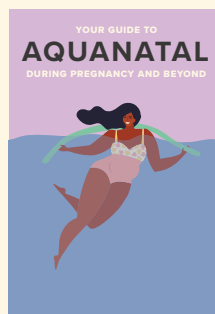
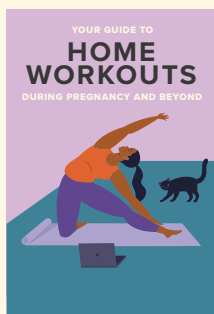
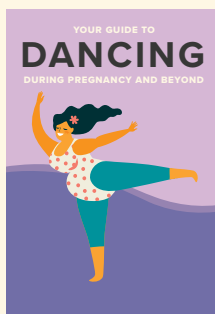
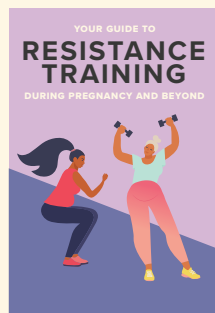
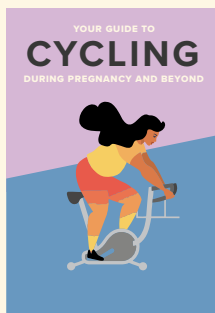
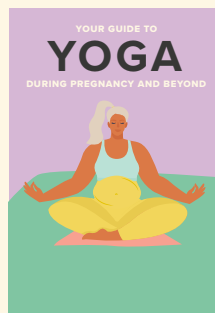
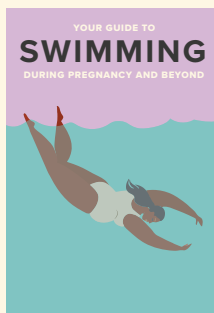
YOUR GUIDE TO

YOGA

DURING PREGNANCY AND BEYOND



ACTIVITIES COVERED IN THIS SERIES



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Pre- and postnatal yoga classes have become a popular activity during pregnancy and after childbirth. For many, pregnancy yoga is the first time they've stepped onto a yoga mat, but rest assured all levels of experience are supported. A knowledgeable yoga teacher can modify poses to suit your needs, including those with pelvic girdle pain, gestational diabetes and hyperemesis gravidum, to name but a few.

Yoga helps to slow down heart rate, breathing becomes deep and rhythmic, and this in turn can reduce stress hormones. Learning to relax deeply is a life skill that you can carry with you into labour, birth and motherhood.

Some additional benefits of yoga during pregnancy and postpartum include improved sleep, digestion and circulation; increased stamina and strength; and a positive impact on depression and anxiety. There is evidence that yoga can increase confidence for labour and birth and reduce pregnancy related pain. It can also have a positive impact on depression and anxiety.

Postnatally, yoga supports recovery and provides comfort during the transition into motherhood. Many postnatal yoga classes will incorporate some yoga with your baby. This is great for their development, and can help them feed and sleep better by stimulating their immune and digestive systems.

**Not active?
Start
gradually!**

**Already
active?
Keep going!**



⚡ Find a qualified pre- and postnatal yoga teacher who can support and guide you with modifications throughout pregnancy and beyond.

⚡ Wear a supportive bra and consider bump supporting leggings.

⚡ Eat well and drink regularly before and throughout the session to prevent dehydration and overheating.

⚡ Listen to your body and ask the teacher if something doesn't feel right.

⚡ Wear comfortable loose clothing – consider layering to accommodate for changing room and body temperature.

⚡ Use props and modify poses as needed – ask your teacher for guidance.

DO's

❯ Avoid 'overstretching' and 'pushing through' a class as you may have done before pregnancy.

❯ Try not to hold your breath, but also avoid strong forced breathing.

❯ Avoid front extensions, inversions, poses where you lie on your front, strong twists, and deep backbends.

❯ Avoid overheating and extreme heat conditions, e.g. Hot Yoga.

❯ Don't continue the class through pain, lightheadedness, breathing difficulties, contractions, vaginal bleeding, amniotic fluid leakage or any other unusual symptoms. Stop and seek advice.

DON'Ts

❯ Avoid advanced poses that challenge and build heat (e.g. vigorous or new poses).

❯ Avoid changing positions too quickly – don't sit down or stand up too quickly.

❯ After the first trimester, avoid poses which require you to lie flat on your back.

TOP TIPS

- ★ Local classes can be a great way to get to know other pregnant women and new mums in your area.
- ★ Try to attend at least six classes to develop a routine that you can practice at home and use throughout labour and birth.
- ★ Find a qualified pre- and postnatal teacher who is the right fit for you, so you can look forward to class.
- ★ New evidence suggests that yoga may have therapeutic benefits for women with high-risk pregnancies, however, you should always discuss this with your healthcare team.
- ★ Practice poses at home and remember to incorporate breathwork and relaxation.



AFTER CHILDBIRTH

Give your body time to heal, prioritise rest and recovery in the early weeks. If you've had a straightforward birth, you can start gentle exercises as soon as you feel up to it. This could include walking, gentle stretches, pelvic floor exercises and exercises that target the deepest layer of the abdominal muscles. If you've had a caesarean or any surgical intervention and/or complications, your recovery time will be longer.

The 6-8 week postnatal check is a good time to discuss physical activity with your healthcare professional. Reintroduce activities gradually and focus on technique, breathing, pelvic floor and abdominal function.

You should only return to higher intensity activities once you have recovered from childbirth and in the absence of any

signs or symptoms of pelvic floor and/or abdominal wall dysfunction. Consider seeking the support of a specialist pelvic health physiotherapist during this time.

Breastfeeding, when being active at a moderate intensity or when taking part in strength training, is safe and does not impact on breast milk quality or infant growth. It is recommended that you express or feed your baby before taking part in a yoga class. Also consider investing in a suitable bra that will give you support whilst training and remember to keep breast pads with you to manage any leaking that can occur.



GENERAL ADVICE

Ask your healthcare professional about the Chief Medical Officers' national guidance for physical activity during pregnancy and after childbirth.

DURING PREGNANCY

It's worth noting that the national guidance applies to uncomplicated pregnancies. We suggest taking this resource with you to your next appointment and to discuss your active pregnancy with your midwife or other healthcare professional.

**If it feels comfortable,
KEEP GOING**

**If it's uncomfortable,
STOP & SEEK ADVICE**



AFTER CHILDBIRTH BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS

Reintroduction of physical activity after birth should be gradual and individualised.

The 6-8 week postnatal check is a good time to discuss this with your healthcare team, remember to take this document with you.

With any signs and symptoms of pelvic floor and/or abdominal wall dysfunction, more intense activities should not resume and referral to a specialist pelvic health physiotherapist is recommended.



“Being active has many mental and physical health benefits, so as a midwife, I can’t wait to spread the word and share these fantastic resources with new mums, mums-to-be and my professional colleagues.”

Dr Jacque Gerrard, Midwife
MBE DU_{niv} MSc RM RGN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DISCLAIMER

Always consult and follow the advice of your healthcare professional.

This resource does not constitute or replace medical advice.

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