

# **Prenatal Yoga**

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I'm beginning to believe that we are in the midst of creating the next baby boom generation. With each day, my eyes focus their attention on yet another woman carrying around a little bundle inside themselves, seemingly going about their day but with the newfound perspective that they are in the process of nourishing a life. Perhaps I am sensitively attuned to expecting mothers because I myself am pregnant much like planning a trip to Iceland, a place you think you were unique in choosing but once your plans solidify, remarkably you meet a handful of people who have recently traveled there.

Along with each individual pregnancy comes many new thoughts, ideas, perspectives and uncertainties. Suddenly the sense of responsibility is twofold, acknowledging that how we approach our health is directly link to the health of our baby. So how do we, as expecting mothers maintain calmness, when our life and body are drastically changing? How can we approach childbirth with grace and openness, allowing our fears of the future to diminish? The practice of yoga is a metaphorical representation that can apply to all aspects of our lives, especially during and after pregnancy. As a yoga instructor and practitioner, I would recommend prenatal yoga to almost all expecting mothers.

Prenatal yoga is a safe and gentle form of movement that can be practiced prior to and after one's pregnancy. Prenatal yoga prepares and softens both the body and mind in light of the myriad of structural and hormonal changes, many of which can be uncomfortable. A prenatal yoga practice can help maintain healthy blood pressure levels, relieves back pain, ensures proper and healthy weight gain, strengthens the pelvic muscles, and reduces the likelihood of developing varicose veins. Prenatal yoga also helps to gently create the necessary space in your body as well as the added space for the growing baby. In addition to the physiological benefits, yoga with its emphasis on deep breathing can help calm the mind, resulting in a positive effect on the entire nervous system. After all, if we experience stress, so does our baby. Giving yourself the gift of a prenatal yoga class also grants you the time to connect with yourself and your baby, quieting the body and mind in order to have an experience in which you are present to communicate with your little one. You will discover a new community of expecting moms in your prenatal yoga class whom will undoubtedly share similar feelings, while embarking on an amazing process that has connected women from the beginning of time. A group class will provide you with much need empathy, support and friendship that is beneficial throughout your pregnancy and beyond.

As we progress along in our pregnancy, the bump under the belly grows to such an unimaginable size that balancing on two feet seems like an impossible feat. It is at this stage that we begin to look with wonderment and doubt towards delivery and the birthing. A prenatal yoga practice can provide you with many tools for a natural and safe birth. Yogic breathing guides you towards a deep and natural breath instead of a contrived method of breathing. In prenatal classes, you are asked to bring your consciousness into the body identifying places of holding and tension while learning how

to release these areas. During birth, your body will certainly identify tension, which upon softening can make for an easier delivery. Finally, you will have strengthened the pelvis muscles through various postures and during birth you can draw your awareness to these muscles guiding them to into use in order to bring your child into this world.

In the Durango area, we have many resources that can provide us with information regarding prenatal yoga. Begin by talking to your obstetrician, midwife, or doula about prenatal yoga. Dedicate some time for researching the practice as well as the instructors that teach prenatal classes in the area. Lastly, appreciate yourself for being proactive in your consideration of prenatal yoga, a wonderful choice for you and your baby!