

Sequence for First Trimester and Throughout Pregnancy

Amid all the efforts to educate pregnant women on health, diet, and medical issues, scant attention has been paid to the benefits of Yoga for your own well-being and that of your baby.

One reason for this inattention could be concerns about safety. Iyengar Yoga, however, is especially safe, and in this book we give utmost consideration to this important issue.

Another factor that may cause you to hesitate about Yoga is fear of the poses themselves. For this reason, we've sequenced—and sometimes modified—the asanas for you, putting first not only the ones most suitable for beginners, but also those that will gradually increase your courage.

For example, you can start with the forward-bending asanas, which are done sitting down.

The only way to conquer fear is by personal experience. Courage will come when fear is overcome. The forward bends help you gradually triumph over fear and build up courage.

Knowledge through Yoga, and the benefits of Yoga, can also only be attained by personal experience. You will only know what your capacity is to absorb these blessings by trying and experimenting. The simple sitting asanas mentioned above, with the forward extension of the spine, enable you to get a clear picture of your capabilities. Sitting down is more relaxing and less intimidating, especially when you're pregnant. The poses include Janu Shirshasana, Baddha Konasana, Supta Baddha Konasana, and Upavishtha Konasana.

Recommended Sequence



1 Parvatasana from Svastikasana (sitting on bolster), page 74



2 Parvatasana from Virasana (sitting on bolster), page 74



3 Virasana, page 73

SEQUENCES OF ASANAS FOR BEGINNERS



4 Supta Virasana (bolster/s), page 130



5 Upavishtha Konasana (sitting up), page 71



6 Baddha Konasana (straight back), page 67



7 Janu Shirshasana (concave back, lower chest lifted), page 83



8 Supta Baddha Konasana (bolster lengthwise, slanted plank), page 128

9 Chain of asanas for before and after Salamba Shirshasana (with a teacher)

Before: Maha Mudra, Adho Mukha Shvnanasana, and Uttanasana (concave back)

After, reverse order: Uttanasana (concave back), Adho Mukha Shvnanasana, and Maha Mudra.



early pregnancy advanced pregnancy



10 Salamba Sarvangasana (chair), page 103



11 Ardha Halasana (chair), pages 104 – 105





12 Shavasana (on bolster/s), at least twice a day for at least 10 – 15 minutes and whenever you feel like having a rest, page 134

13 Ujjayi Pranayama 1 and 2 (lying on bolster), page 148

These asanas widen and stretch both the space in the pelvis and the uterus. They ensure good blood circulation in the pelvis and enough space for the fetus: in the beginning, so it can settle, and later on, to avoid compression so that it can move freely. Together with the pranayama (pages 140 – 153), they soothe and quiet your nerves. You gain confidence, courage, strength, and energy.

Durations

- Janu Shirshasana: 30 seconds per side
- Parvatasana (with reversing the way you interlock your thumbs): 30 seconds each way
- Virasana: 1 to 2 minutes
- Rest of the poses: 5 minutes

Apart from the sequence above, we suggest that you see Part III, Chapter 9, Problems A – Z, and practice the asanas that help with:

- Spinal muscles, weakness of
- Abdomen, heaviness of
- Fatigue

Always stop earlier if you feel the need!

Coming out of the pose

Maintain the space you have created while coming back.

Sequences for the Second and Third Trimesters

Enhancing strength and inner balance

You can start these sequences in the second trimester and continue them throughout the third trimester as long as it is comfortable. You have made it through the first difficult months, and with your doctor's approval, can add some new poses.

This is a good time to begin the standing asanas. They help to strengthen the spine and widen the pelvis. Practice these with precise alignment and full extension of the spine, so that there is no pressure on your abdomen, but rather a lifting feeling from the pelvic floor.

Don't practice standing asanas if you've had miscarriages or have a disposition toward them

Durations

- Asanas practiced on the right and left side: stay for 30 to 60 seconds per side
- Asanas that extend straight forward or backward (like Ardha Uttanasana or Chatushpadasana): 30 to 60 seconds
- Inversions (pages 96 – 114):
 - Salamba Sarvangasana: If you practice it without Ardha Halasana, stay in it 2 to 3 minutes longer than Salamba Shirshasana.
 - Ardha Halasana, Setu Bandha Sarvangasana, and Viparita Karani: up to 5 minutes
 - Rest of poses: 5 to 10 minutes
- Restorative Asanas (pages 126 – 139):
 - Shavasana: 15 minutes
 - Rest of poses: up to 5 minutes

HINT: There are too many asanas here to practice all at one time, so try alternating the sequences.

because of a glandular problem. Please seek out the advice of an experienced Iyengar Yoga teacher.

Concentrate instead on the asanas in Chapter 3, including:

Janu Shirshasana, Concave Back (page 82)
Pashchimottanasana, Concave Back (page 87)
Baddha Konasana, Straight Back, Relief during Pregnancy (page 110)
Shavasana (page 134)

For more detailed descriptions of the asanas, and for modifications, see Chapter 3, "Instructions and Benefits."

General Guidelines

- Always stretch your spine and keep it lifted.
- Never exert pressure on your abdomen, which also exerts pressure on the throat and thyroid.
- Don't invite hormonal disturbances by forcing yourself and relying on willpower; it's better to work on proper alignment with a soft abdomen and throat.
- Protect the growing life in your womb by not forcing out your breath, but letting it flow softly and smoothly.
- Don't jump into the standing asanas.
- Practice the back bends with the supports as indicated, to avoid weakening the inner lining of the uterus.
- Practice the twisting asanas as indicated, for the same reason as above.
- When you come back from an asana, always maintain your lift, extension, and expansion. Don't collapse or make jolting movements.

In addition, keep in mind the guidelines in Part II, Chapter 3, "The Beginning of Your Pregnancy."