

Prepare yourself physically and mentally for the birth of your baby

Yoga & Pregnancy



The little blue line confirms the presence of your new baby. A smile rises from within, igniting your whole being, and an aura of responsibility for another being suddenly takes hold of you. For the next nine months, you become entranced with and sensitive to your growing baby, awakened by each of their movements and hiccups. They in turn become in tune with the inner workings of your body, the sound of your heartbeat and your voice, and aware of your touch and emotions.

BY MEL CAMPBELL

Your motherly instincts catch hold of you as you intuitively find yourself wrapping your hands protectively around your belly, wanting to nurture your baby and keep them safe. You find yourself mindfully sending messages of love and reassurance as you unconsciously seek ways to cherish and care for them.

The maternal instinct

Your new growing baby is barely the size of a grape in these early weeks of your pregnancy, yet already you are their mother and your maternal instincts guide you. For first-time mothers, pregnancy can evoke feelings of anxiety, as they become crippled with an overwhelming sense of responsibility while caring and loving someone they have yet to hold and see.

As the new baby is carefully crafting their own physical makeup, fueled by your body, you may find yourself considering your lifestyle as you instinctively want to create a conducive environment for the new baby to live in.

For the next 40 weeks, you and your baby will be entwined together, united through the mind, body, and breath. You can help ensure a healthy pregnancy by eating well, having regular exercise, getting plenty of rest, and avoiding things which could potentially harm your new baby. By remembering the affirmation “all that I do, I do it with you,” you can become conscientious of making the right choices about health, diet, and exercise to help support the well-being of your baby.

Pregnancy is a time to celebrate, a time to rejoice and feel blessed that you’ve been chosen to carry such an incredible gift of life. It is a time to celebrate your life and the giving of life to another. It is important that you take time to create a nurturing environment—mind and body—for your developing baby to thrive and grow through what you eat and do during your daily life.

Nutrition during pregnancy

Throughout her pregnancy a woman naturally needs more nutritional and

caloric intake to align with her own body’s maternal changes and to support the growth and development of her baby. As a general guideline, the recommended daily amount of calories increases by 300 in the second and third trimester—this isn’t an excuse to eat for two!

By limiting the amount of sugary and refined food consumed during pregnancy, and eating a well-balanced diet of fresh vegetables, fruit, animal and dairy products, you can enrich your body with protein, fiber, vitamins, nutrients, and minerals, and provide a healthy environment for your baby to grow and develop.

By using the affirmation “what is healthy for me is healthy for my growing baby,” you can remember to avoid substances which are potentially harmful to your growing baby, like alcohol; drugs; high caffeine intake; raw products (shellfish, meat, sushi); soft, unpasteurized, and mold-ripened cheeses.

Prenatal yoga during each trimester

Throughout the forty weeks of gestation, the body takes an incredible journey to support, feed, and develop the growing baby, so you need to take extra care of yourself. Prenatal yoga is a gentle way for you to stay relaxed in your mind yet active and supple in your body, helping to alleviate any common pregnancy symptoms as you prepare physically, emotionally, and spiritually for each stage of pregnancy, labor, childbirth, and motherhood.

The first trimester of pregnancy is the most challenging. Although the body is going through rapid daily changes on the inside, there is no evidence of this on the outside. As you may be gripped by irresistible tiredness and an aching feeling of nausea, inside your womb your new baby is beginning to set down its foundations in the uterus. This will be the baby’s home for the next 40 weeks as it changes from a single embryonic cell into a developing fetus: is it any wonder you feel tired?

What is healthy for me is healthy for my growing baby.

Incredibly, by week nine the physical makeup of the growing baby is formed. By the end of the first trimester it is moving effortlessly around in its own oceanic sea of amniotic fluid. During these early weeks, it is vital that you are mindful of the settlements taking place in your womb and relinquish any temptations to overachieve, overexert, and strive. By quietly sitting and directing your awareness to your growing baby, you can learn to connect with your new creation and enjoy time of being together in body, mind, and spirit.

Entering the second trimester, you may become awakened with a new shift in energy which fills your being. Hopefully any feelings of nausea, morning sickness, and irresistible tiredness have abated. By embracing and welcoming this injection of vigor, you can enjoy a time of togetherness, regain your power, and focus on building strength and stamina for the next phase of your pregnancy.

By practicing poses like Warrior 2 in prenatal yoga, you can cultivate feelings of strength, endurance, and courage, as you begin to prepare yourself physically and mentally for the final journey of your pregnancy and the birth of your baby.

Challenged by the instinctive lure to nest in the third trimester, you should be encouraged to find ways to conserve your energy and seek time out to rest and revive. As thoughts of the birth coupled with anxieties and fear occupy your mind, it is important to return to a more mindful practice of meditation, visualization, and positive thinking. By focusing on the breath, learning strategies to ease discomfort,

and affirming positive thinking you can empower yourself with qualities like mindfulness, patience, acceptance, and faith as you cultivate a positive attitude toward labor and the birth and focus on visualizing the birth of your dreams.

Moving in the asana practice of prenatal yoga can bring heightened awareness of your body's needs and those of your baby. You can learn to listen and trust your intuition, and prepare your body physically for the demands of labor so your body is open and ready to receive the birth of your baby with grace.

And by reminding yourself throughout your pregnancy of the affirmations "all that I do, I do it with you," and "what is healthy for you is healthy for me," you can be mindful of making the right choices with regards to your health, diet, and exercise which can help enhance the experience of your pregnancy and deepen the connection with your growing baby.

A yoga teacher, healer, therapist, and writer, MEL CAMPBELL is the author of THE YOGA OF PREGNANCY (Findhorn Press) a week-by-week guide to help mothers-to-be to connect with their growing baby through the mind, body and breath. For more information visit yogawithmelcampbell.com.

FIRST TRIMESTER

Heart Opener Pose

- 1 From a tabletop position, I slide my legs outwards and sit in between my feet. I place my hands on the floor behind me with my fingers facing forward.
- 2 I roll my shoulders down and back and breathe into my upper chest.
- 3 Closing my eyes, I stay here for five breaths.
- 4 Lifting my hips up, I come into full expression of the pose.
- 5 Staying for five breaths, I mindfully repeat: **My baby is an expression of my love I have to share.**

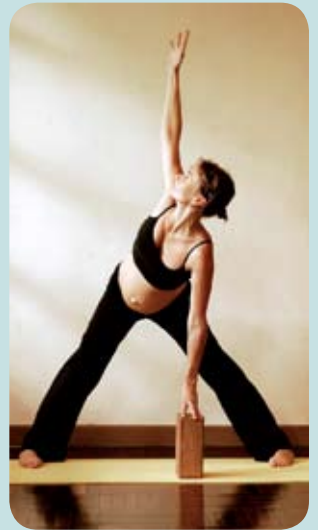


The Goddess Flow



- 1 With my feet forward and parallel, I turn my feet out at a slight angle, making sure my heels are in line.
- 2 I bend my knees, stacking them directly above my ankles.
- 3 I bring my hands to form a shape like an opening flower in front of my heart and take a breath.
- 4 Inhaling, I raise my hands above my head, following them with my eyes, and straighten my legs.
- 5 Exhaling, I curl my fingers over so the backs of the fingers touch each other. Softly I bend my knees and lower my arms.
- 6 I form the shape of an opening flower and rest my hands in front of my heart.
- 7 I repeat this flow five times.
- 8 Mindfully I repeat: **Each breath I take sends energy to my growing baby.**

Wide Angled Forward Bend



- 1 I take a wide stance. My feet face forward and are parallel. I take a forward fold, rest my hands on the floor beneath my shoulders, and take a breath.
- 2 With hips level and belly soft, I direct my upper chest over to the left and open up into a twist.
- 3 I raise my left arm up and come into a full expression of the pose.
- 4 With each inhalation I soften my belly. With each exhalation I let my organs be gently massaged through the action of this open twist.
- 5 Staying for five breaths, I mindfully repeat: **What is healthy for me is healthy for my growing baby.**
- 6 I repeat the open twist to my other side.



Cat Sequence

- 1 In a tabletop position my hands are underneath my shoulders, and my knees are slightly wider than my hips.
- 2 I inhale and direct my breath all the way down to baby.
- 3 Through my exhalation I round my spine, tuck my chin towards my chest and look towards my baby.
- 4 Letting my breath lead my body, I synchronize these movements with my breath. On my inhalations I return to the original position, and with my exhalations I form the shape of step three.
- 5 As I repeat this sequence five times, mindfully I repeat the affirmation: **My circulation is flowing efficiently and effectively, continually sending nourishment to my growing baby.**



Downward-Facing Dog

- 1 In a tabletop position my hands are underneath my shoulders and my knees slightly wider than my hips.
- 2 I position my knees behind my hips.
- 3 With the creases of my wrists parallel with the front edge of my yoga mat, I ground down through my fingertips and knuckles.
- 4 I turn my toes under and lift my hips up towards the sky, coming into an inverted v-shape.
- 5 I lengthen my spine and straighten my legs.
- 6 I draw my heels down towards the earth.
- 7 Staying for five breaths, I mindfully repeat: **I am sensitive to my needs and the needs of my growing baby.**

All that I do,
I do it for you.

THIRD TRIMESTER



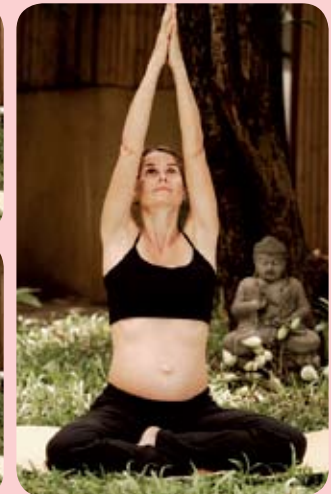
Warrior 2

- 1 With a wall behind me, I take a wide stance with my feet forward and parallel.
- 2 I turn my right foot out, aligning my right heel with my left foot arch.
- 3 With both hips facing the center of the room, I wrap my arms around baby.
- 4 Inhaling, I raise my arms up and out and look toward my right fingers.
- 5 Exhaling, I bend my right knee.
- 6 I feel strong and courageous like a warrior as I begin to prepare myself for birth.
- 7 Staying for three breaths, I mindfully repeat: **Each powerful surge is my body's way of bringing my baby closer to me.**
- 8 Repeat the pose to other side.



Tabletop Pelvic Rotations

- 1 From a tabletop position, I begin to make small circular clockwise movements with my hips, gradually increasing the size of the circles.
- 2 I imagine the rising of a surge ascending through my body.
- 3 My circles become bigger, opening my hips and creating space for baby to descend.
- 4 Mindfully I repeat: Giving birth is a natural process and my body is perfectly designed to do it.
- 5 As the surge subsides I rest in Child's pose.
- 6 I feel the next surge rising, return to tabletop position, circulate my hips counterclockwise, and repeat the sequence.



Seated Namasté Flow

- 1 From a cross-legged position I bring my hands together in front of my heart, and bow slightly.
- 2 Mindfully I repeat: **I trust my body and my baby to know exactly what to do.**
- 3 Inhaling, I extend my arms out. I bring my hands to meet above my head and gaze toward my hands.
- 4 Exhaling, I slowly bring my hands back in front of my heart and follow with my gaze. I imagine this wisdom cascading into my soul and flowing down to my baby.
- 5 I bow and mindfully repeat the affirmation.
- 6 Repeat five times. 