

Prenatal Lecture Outline for Yoga Teacher Trainings

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ANATOMY: Changes in the pregnant body, where, why and how they occur.

First trimester: Intolerance for heat and fatigue, nausea/dizziness, frequent restroom breaks.

Most common time for miscarriage

Second trimester: the inferior vena cava, decreased breath capacity, surge in energy

Third trimester: increased pressure in the pelvis, relaxin softens joints and allows for greater flexibility, frequent restroom breaks, soreness, swelling and fatigue may increase

After 35 weeks, baby's position affects asana practice

Postpartum: Pelvic floor muscles heal, uterus returns to pre-pregnancy position, rectus abdominus muscles begin to shorten, breastfeeding mamas may experience discomfort with pressure on the chest. Wait for 6-8 weeks or for provider's endorsement. *Core work with *extreme caution* because of possible diastasis recti.

POSES ALWAYS CONTRAINDICATED DURING PREGNANCY:

Anything that puts pressure on the belly (belly lying poses and forward folds)

Deep, closed twists

Ballistic “jumping” movements

Anything lying on the back after 18 weeks (or earlier if it causes discomfort or multiparous)

Rectus abdominus and obliques core exercises

Anything that requires breath to be held

POSES THAT MAY BE CONTRAINDICATED DURING PREGNANCY:

Inversions for those with higher blood pressure

Squatting and inversions for a known breech presentation (after 35 weeks)

POSES AND PRACTICES CONTRAINDICATED POSTPARTUM:

Rectus abdominus and obliques core exercises

Wide legged standing poses

Anything with deep chest pressure, like full shalabhasana

COMMON POSES TO MODIFY DURING PREGNANCY AND THEIR ASSISTS:

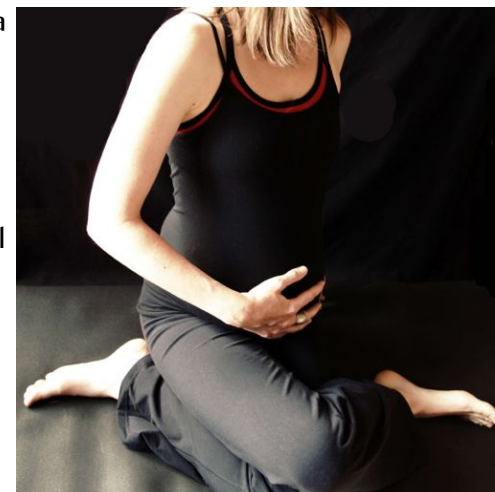
Child's pose: knees wider, block support under the forehead to elevate belly. No change to assist.

Downward facing dog: feet wider, possible hands on blocks, knees very soft *be careful after 35 weeks.* Downward puppy is a good alternative. No change to assist.

Twists: twist away from the extended knee rather than towards. Twist only to 50% of maximal twist. Assist should focus on vertical spine and neck massage; do not deepen the twist.

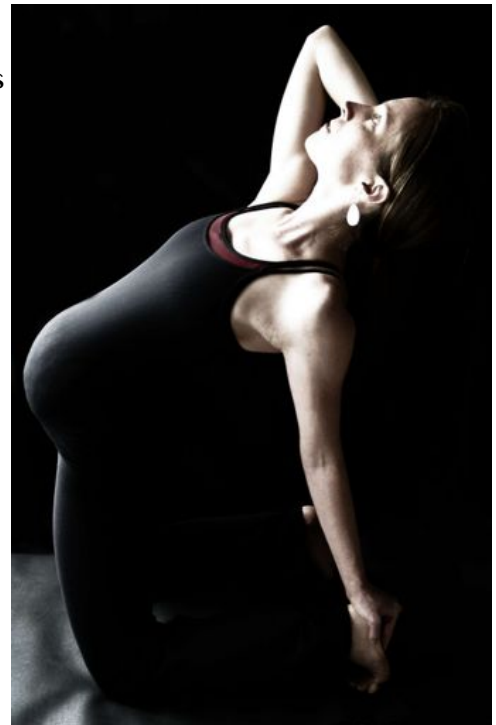
Lunges/pyramid: be aware of the front knee projecting too far forwards or the pelvis sinking too low. Use block support inside the front leg. Focus assists on pelvic alignment and front knee placement.

Core: replace crunches, bicycles, boat, etc. with spinal extensions, reverse table top, squats, or side-lying core exercises. No assists. Consider offering these actions to the entire class when teaching an advanced section.



Camel: using the support of a block on the highest level, recline one side at a time, keeping the other hand behind the head. Hands off during this version of camel.

Half pigeon: no change below the waist. Above the waist, rotate inwards and use the support of a block underneath the elbows to avoid pressure on the belly.



Forward folds: happy baby can be done seated, with knees wide. Otherwise only wide-legged forward folds (sitting or standing). Assist modification: never add pressure into the fold, focus on alignment or neck massage.

Savasana: use side-lying savasana with the support of blankets or blocks (one under head, one between knees). Assist: please consider offering a hands-on assist during savasana! Practice a side-lying assist as you practice your savasana assists.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Hot yoga: is it safe for pregnant women?

Yin yoga: this sounds like a good choice for pregnant women. Is it?

Postpartum: when can mama return to yoga?

Prenatal yoga: how is a prenatal yoga class different from other classes?

Tips for teaching “two classes” at once (when one or more students are pregnant)

Empowering women: pregnancy isn't an injury

Every pregnancy is different: recognizing that each experience is unique for every woman

Addressing loss

RESOURCES:

Books:

Beautiful, Bountiful, Blissful by Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa

Yoga for Women, by Gita Iyengar

Online:

Additional reading from a Bikram Yoga studio owner:

[http://www.bikramyogavancouver.com/database/rte/Pregnancy%20and%20Bikram%20Yoga\(1\).pdf](http://www.bikramyogavancouver.com/database/rte/Pregnancy%20and%20Bikram%20Yoga(1).pdf)

Class Observations with Kari:

Yoga teachers, teachers in training, and birth professionals are welcome to participate in and observe my prenatal classes at cambio. I only permit one visitor at a time, so please schedule in advance. My class participants have the right to refuse visitors at any time, for any reason, and I honor their requests.

Kari Kwinn, ERYT, RPYT, LE, is Colorado Springs' only registered prenatal yoga teacher. She has taught more than 10,000 hours of yoga classes, including hundreds of pregnant and postpartum students. She has attended more than 30 births, supported dozens of women postpartum, and writes extensively about her experiences. She is currently pursuing her CLE lactation educator credential.

Special thanks to Pure Presence Photography for the photos used in this handout