

# A Very Simple Beginner's Guide To Prenatal and Postnatal Kundalini Yoga

By Siri Mukh Kaur

There are many reasons I wanted to compile this information for our teacher training group. First and foremost is that the time during and after pregnancy requires a little extra care and kindness to our potential students. Even if we are not interested in pursuing the specific study of prenatal and postnatal we will without a doubt have pregnant students or students that have recently given birth. Without adequate information it would be very easy to give misinformation.

I designed to handout not only to assist the teacher on how to accommodate pregnancy in the classroom but also as a beginner's guide, in case you are thinking of having children of your own. There is a lot of technical information that you won't necessarily need as a teacher but is interesting to know and can be helpful to share with students. As it is always said, we are not doctors and it is not our responsibility to diagnose, but it can be helpful to point people in the right direction.

This handout is organized as follows: basic information that are useful for each trimester including helpful exercises and meditations, the birth itself, Yoga do's and don'ts, what to eat etc. and resources.

A yoga and meditation practice during pregnancy can help:

- to strengthen the muscles and make the body more supple which will aid in the delivery
- remain meditative, unprovoked, and decent throughout pregnancy elevating you and your unborn child
- maintain and develop your flexibility and strength to be set for birthing
- prepare mind for birthing, stretch your body and support your relaxation
- align your body to handle the additional weight of your womb and breasts
- improve your breathing and strengthen your pelvic floor.

A yoga and meditation practice after the birth can help:

- center yourself and your changes into mother and fatherhood
- restore the uterus, abdomen and pelvic floor
- relieve upper back and breast tension

The parts of the body that yoga works on, in particular during pregnancy, are the stomach muscles, spine, back muscles and pelvis. Strength in the abdominal region will assist the carriage of the fetus and aid proper development. The muscles of the stomach and the abdomen are essential for pushing the child from the womb. A strong, supple spine is necessary for general flexibility and toning, and the healthy functioning of the nervous system.

Deep yogic breathing is particularly useful, as the growth of the baby enlarges the uterus to such an extent that the diaphragm is pushed upwards. This can result in a shortness of breath.

I have only looked at a few different books and DVDs with actual exercise sequences or kriyas and in fact, it seems as though there is less emphasis on kriya and much more on specific exercises that are particularly good for the body during pregnancy. As for choosing kriyas for pregnancy, anything that is heart opening, or works on the 4<sup>th</sup> chakra, is advisable. This is a time more than ever when the heart needs to be open. Anything that has a focus on meditation is also great.

First trimester: Consider keeping knowledge of your pregnancy between yourself and your partner because it is a very emotional time with hormones running wild. Make sure to be around your friends and family that are positive and will support you. If anyone tries to give you any negativity, remember this is just a projection of their own experience. It is not at you or about you. Listen kindly. Dismiss it quickly. Don't take any of that energy in. During first trimester cultivate patience. This is one of the most important things you can do. Truly accept your partner for who he or she is. Talk about how becoming parents will challenge both of you as you nurture your child throughout your lives: spiritually, emotionally, professionally, financially, and socially.

Be patient with the process of being pregnant. Don't push yourself too hard through the uncomfortable moments, try to enjoy it for what it is. Say, "Wahe Guru!" and say thank you for allowing me to feel being uncomfortable is better than not feeling anything at all.

To deal with morning sickness walk, walk and walk some more. Ginger tea also helps. There's no sure fire way to deal with morning sickness. Just remember that it will pass.

"According to ancient teachings, souls don't just randomly reincarnate. There is a specific, divine plan. You, as parents, are a big part of that plan. Relax. Ultimately, a soul can never fail on its path to perfect realization. To succeed, the soul will come back as many times as necessary to fulfill its spiritual mission." (Gurmukh 17) "Our babies are created in the only viable place in our bodies they could come from: the center, the point from which our chi, or life energy, radiates. The navel represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> chakra, the fundamental element of commitment. Our babies feed on this energy, and are sustained by it, becoming the sun, the center of the universe, the center of their mothers. The arrangement could not be more perfect." (Gurmukh 29)

Until the 120<sup>th</sup> day most women can practice normal Kundalini Yoga exercises including bandhas, breath of fire (unless there is a history of miscarriages or complications) Before the 120<sup>th</sup> day, the incarnating soul is still unaffected by the limitations and influences of the earth.

2<sup>nd</sup> trimester: The 120<sup>th</sup> day is when the soul enters the child. This is traditionally, when the pregnancy would be announced. This is a time for celebration, to bring friends and family together to share in this experience. The yogic perspective is that couples should refrain from having sex after this day because the intense energy can be overwhelming to the baby. However, medically there is nothing wrong with having sex during this time. Listen to your body and do what feels right. At a women's retreat in 1976 Yogi Bhajan said this about sex, "After the 120<sup>th</sup> day of pregnancy, it is a crime because the Soul has entered, and you should not hammer the Soul. Normally it takes one year after delivery for the vagina to take its normal shape and come to a normal polarity. It needs a rest of about a year. Normally there should be two years difference between one delivery and the next pregnancy."

The subconscious mind of your child starts developing at this point. Allow yourself to be transformed and remove any karmic blocks you may have. Since, this is when the subconscious mind is being developed consider the types of movies and books and magazines you choose to read. Think funny, happy, and romantic. The mother is the first teacher. Your child first learns from your state of consciousness while in the womb. Everything you consciously experience, your state of mind, your relationship to the world and your rapport to your child, are all transmitted to your child and become the foundation of your child's subconscious, which is the root of his/her personality. (3ho.org) Children are the incarnate of the soul body and the subtle body. It is important to recognize that the other 8 bodies (negative mind, positive mind, neutral mind, physical body, arcline, auric body, pranic body, and radiant body) are formed by our mother. When we leave the physical body these 8 bodies return to the earth. "When a mother is pregnant, the kind of soul she can accept depends on her mental attitude. And then there is another beauty that within the realm of your belly, which is your pregnancy, you can totally transform the soul. The soul is pure...but the subtle body carries the karma of the previous life. A mother can totally purify the subtle body." - Yogi Bhajan. The vibratory frequency of the woman has a momentous affect on the entering soul. Her vibratory frequency can totally purify the subtle body of the new being. Because this soul has been attracted to her frequency, when she uplifts her frequency, she can "erase" specific karmic limits so the new being does NOT need to play out these karmas. She consciously can utilize yoga, meditation, prayers, or conscious realization. (3ho.org)

Also, the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester is when you can start planning your birth. Do you want it to be in a hospital, a birthing center, or at home? Do you want the assistance of a doctor, midwife or doula? How do you feel about a water birth or birthing in a squatting position? These are your choices to make and now more than ever you get to think and act intuitively to decide what feels right and what you want. As the mother you get to call the shots. Begin with exercises that open the hips and relieve tension in the back. After the 120<sup>th</sup>

day, a woman needs to adjust her yoga practice; no heavy exercises, no inversions, no breath of fire, no bandhas except jalandhar bandha, and no gong.

Dig into your beliefs. What are the stories that friends and family members have told you about their births? What was your own birth like? This is a good opportunity to lay to rest any ill feelings of your birth or your family of origin.

3<sup>rd</sup> trimester: This is when the plans for your birth should be in place and you finally have time to relax, tune into the baby, and see what comes. Remember that babies come when they may and two weeks before the due date to two weeks after the due date is totally normal. False labor or contractions before birth are very normal. They can happen more frequently if you are dehydrated, lacking calcium, or under stress. This is practice for the real contractions, take this time to breathe consciously and learn how to respond to these feelings. Change your vocabulary. Rather than saying the “pain” of labor say “sensation.” It is not pain; it is your greatest challenge. “Since epidurals interfere with the body’s natural production of hormones and neurotransmitters involved in the birth process, they can actually slow labor down.” (Gurmukh 134). This is a good way to remember that labor “sensations” are inevitable.

Sex can help secrete oxytocin the peptide that has to become active to go into labor because it makes your uterus contract. So in the last few weeks sex can help you go into labor. Oxytocin is released by your pituitary gland and the functioning of the neocortex, simultaneously, needs to be reduced. Focusing at the 3<sup>rd</sup> eye, gentle massaging of the breasts, lavender and orange blossom oil can help stimulate the production of oxytocin. Things that stimulate the neocortex are being asked a lot of questions, the feeling of being observed, bright lights, fear and anxiety. The latter are all things that should be avoided during labor.

Squatting during birth: this is the traditional way to birth it doesn’t put pressure on the vena cava and aorta, it widens the pelvic region as much as 25%, it produces minimal muscle strain and gives a good angle for the baby’s descent, helps gravity work for you, lessens tearing of the perineum and gives the baby optimal oxygen. This should not be done if you are on bed rest or the baby is in breech.

To help stretch the perineum for crowning and avoiding episiotomies: take a linden flower tea sitz bath, apply vitamin e oil, have your midwife or doctor physically stretch the perineum by pulling, use a warm wet compress on the perineum.

Yoga can help if the baby is in a breech position. This could mean the baby is standing straight up in the womb (footling breech), presenting butt first (frank breech), sitting cross-legged in the womb (complete breech) or the baby is kneeling inside (kneeling breech). Either way, very few doctors will deliver a breech baby vaginally. If a

mother finds out her baby is breech, she is often anxious to help turn the baby around. Luckily, there are some yoga poses that can assist with this.

Poses to help turn a breech baby:

- Prolonged inversion like downward dog
- “Butt up” child’s pose
- Supported bridge pose
- AVOID squatting, as it opens the outlet of the pelvis and invites the baby to wedge itself deeper down.

After birth: Ask a close friend or family member for help during the first 40 days so that you can spend as much time with the new baby as possible. Yogic tradition and numerous family-oriented cultures around the globe honor and nurture them both during these first six weeks. These sacred days set the tone for a comforting and caring relationship among the child and the family, and rejuvenate the mother for breast-feeding, and child care. Have friends and family help with shopping, laundry, cleaning and cooking. Yogis recommend that the mother and child remain at home during these days with no or limited visitors. This is their special sacred time. This time is significant for the mother and child, as they adjust to the separation of their subtle, emotional and physical energies. (3ho.org) This will help them develop of sense of trust in such a strange and new world. Take these first 40 days as a rest for yourself too. You can end up very tired and drained if you try to only sleep at night as you are used to. Instead, sleep when the baby sleeps and your body will heal a lot faster.

You will very likely have tired and stretched pelvic floor muscles. Continue the pelvic exercises by stopping and starting the flow of urine. It will take some time for your vagina and pelvic area to realign and heal itself – usually this takes a year. Bridge pose is another helpful one. For postpartum make sure to include warm ups and a lengthy relaxation period. Drink plenty of water.

Poses to do throughout your pregnancy: Use a cushion if there is tension in the lower back or if you feel pressure from the additional weight.

**Modified spinal flex:** in easy pose put the hands on the ankles inhale the chest comes forward and the heart lifts exhale let not just the lower back move back but lean the whole body into it. This is very relieving to the tension in the lower back. You can also do this with the hands on the knees.

**Cat-cow:** from rock pose puts your arms out palms down on the floor directly underneath the shoulders and stretch the knees apart so they are directly under your hips inhale lift the head and arch the belly downward, exhale arch the back up and let the head drop down. Anything where your stomach is down is great. It is very soothing to the baby because it is so rhythmic. It helps stretch and alleviates tension in your back

**Squats:** from standing squat into crow pose with hands in prayer pose. Then rock forward onto your hands lift the hips and waist up and roll your back up slowly to standing. This prepares the mom for the birth. Helps stretch through the hips and widen the pelvis, pelvic floor and birth canal. If your cervix is soft or opened before term, DO NOT practice squats. Takes pressure off spinal discs aligns pelvis strengthens legs.

**Tree pose:** from standing place the hands in prayer pose and lift the leg and place it on the opposite knee, inner thigh or wherever is comfortable. After your balance steadies, lift the arms above the head keeping them in prayer pose. Do this for a few minutes on each side with long deep breathing.

**Pelvic floor lifts:** Practice tightening your pelvic floor muscles by stopping the urine flow as much as possible every day. This will help with the extra weight you are carrying during your pregnancy. This is one of the most important exercises.

**Pranayam:** Practicing pranayam will help greatly through the birth. Long deep breathing and the one minute breath are both highly recommended. Sitali breath is helpful for its cooling effect. Remember no breath of fire or lion's breath.

**Dance:** Dance freely all the time. Let yourself feel joyous to kundalini music or soothing music that makes you feel happy.

**Walk:** Walk, walk and keep walking. This is by far the most important thing to do while pregnant. It will greatly help with the alignment of the lower back and pelvis so that the process of birthing will be easier and your recuperation time will be quickened. Yogi Bhajan recommends walking at least 4 to 5 miles a day. Gurmukh and Tarn Taran say at least 1,000 steps after each meal at the very minimum.

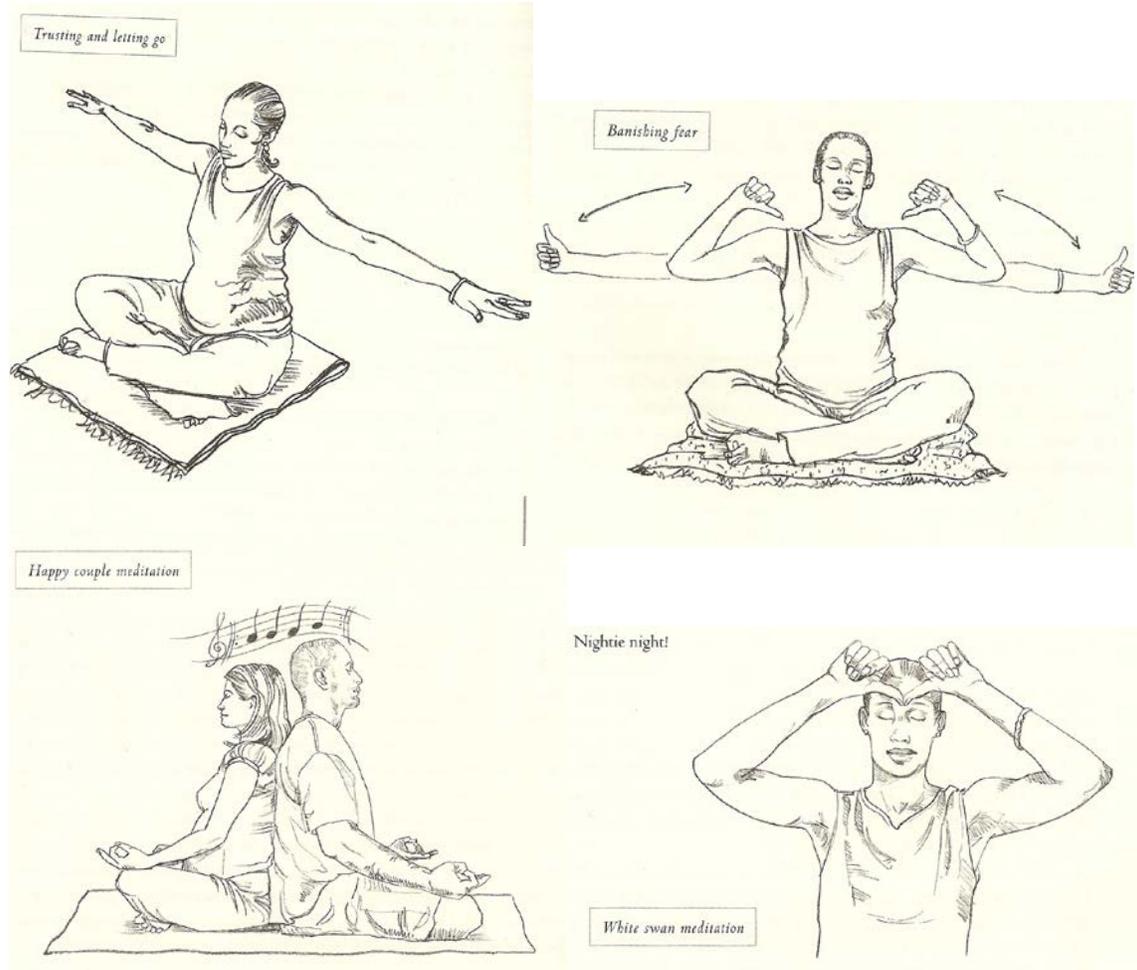
**Charan Jaap** is a walking meditation to be done with a partner. As you step with your left foot mentally vibrate Sat Nam and on the right foot vibrate Wahe Guru. As you walk be aware of your posture. Tuck your buttocks under, rock the lower pelvis forward. Yogi Bhajan recommends walking at least 4-5 miles a day!

**Relaxation:** "lying on your left side is actually better for you and your child. Resting your body on the left side, improves the flow of blood and nutrients to your placenta and assists your kidneys to efficiently eliminate waste products and fluids from your body. Remember your kidneys need to eliminate for you and your child and better kidney function reduces swelling in your ankles, feet and hands." Tarn Taran K 87

To be avoided during pregnancy:

mulabandha, uddiyabandha, plough pose, shoulder stand, leg lifts, loud gong meditations

My favorite meditations from Bountiful, Beautiful, Blissful by Gurmukh



**Trust and letting go:** it will help in letting go of fear and resentments, all the mental blocks that hinder the baby's arrival. Sit in easy pose and raise the arms parallel to the floor, palms facing down. Split the fingers of each hand so the index and middle are together and the ring and pinkie are together with the thumbs relaxed. Close the eyes and breathe for 7 minutes. To finish, inhale deeply and stretch the arms up tightening the entire body. Exhale and repeat this sequence twice more.

**Banishing Fear:** Sit in easy pose with the eyes closed and focused at the 3<sup>rd</sup> eye and extend the arms out to the side, parallel to the ground. Make a fist with the thumb tips sticking out and up, inhale and bring the thumbs to the shoulders, and exhale and lower the hands back down parallel to the floor. Go as fast as you can and don't let the thumbs touch the shoulders. Start with 2 minutes and work up to 7 minutes.

**Happy Couple Meditation:** sit back to back in easy pose with a partner or a close friend. Make sure the base of the spines are touching and chant Sa-Ta-Na-Ma for 11 minutes. Begin by chanting out loud, then move to a whisper, then silently to yourself, back to a whisper, and finally chant aloud again.

**Peace Sleep (White Swan Meditation):** do this right before you go to bed. Make a fist with both hands and place them palms facing out and 6-8 inches away from your face at your brow point. Press the thumbs together until they become white. Briefly look at the white thumb tips and then close your eyes and envision them. Begin long deep breathing inhaling sat and exhaling nam. Begin with 5 minutes and work up to 11. Slip from this meditation into bed and sleep like a baby.

### Hydrotherapy for Pregnancy, Stretch Marks, Massage and Nutrition

For the first 120 days of pregnancy: Massage your belly under cold water until you feel warm. The features and faculty of the child will be very strong. He or she will have grit. Yogis call this “extra nurturing” because it supports a better blood supply.

From the 120<sup>th</sup> day until the 7<sup>th</sup> month: Massage belly under cold water for only 3 minutes. Yogis have recommended this to strengthen a child’s immunity.

From the 7<sup>th</sup> month until delivery: Shower with lukewarm water only. No cold water after the 7<sup>th</sup> month. Disregard the advice given in Gurmukh’s book on hydrotherapy.

To prevent stretch marks: after the first trimester begin massaging your breasts, stomach and thighs in a circular motion with a few drops of wheat germ oil after bathing. Once a week blend together yogurt, lemon and honey and massage on your breasts, stomach, and thighs and rinse off.

Pregnancy massage will reduce pressure on your lower back and buttocks. Have your partner work in a figure 8 along the buttocks and sweeping motions from your lower back to upper back. Foot massages are also very relaxing.

Food for pregnancy: ginger tea (cut up 1 in fresh ginger and boil with 1 cup water and boil for 5 minutes), nutritional yeast, celery, olives, yogi tea, whole grains, and bananas. Cucumbers and watermelon help with water retention. Red raspberry leaf herbal tea helps tone the uterus. Don’t do any detoxing or dieting. Eat something every 2 hours drink at least 12 glasses of water a day. Take snacks with you to avoid junk food. \*The pregnant body needs about 60 grams of protein a day. Also, avoid putting chemical and synthetic ingredients on your skin. Avoid salt. If you follow ayurveda, follow a Vata pacifying diet.

Things to remember:

Children are not futures which you buy and sell. Children are your living embodiment of your dignity, intelligence, and your consciousness. Your emotions and own fears are their worst enemy. Children do not need to go outside to get a snake bite (Yogi Bhajan, 1984).

The majority of people living on the Earth today are born at home. According to the World Health Organization 90-95% of births are normal. 75% of births in Europe are attended by midwives, 5% in the U.S. In the 5 European countries with the lowest infant mortality rates, midwives preside at 70%. Americans could save 13-20 billion annually in healthcare costs by developing a network of midwifery care providers, de-medicalizing childbirth, and encouraging breast feeding. (Frank A. Oski, M.D. director of pediatrics at John Hopkins University School of Medicine)

Resources:

3ho.org

[women@3ho.org](http://women@3ho.org) and [tarntarank@3ho.org](mailto:tarntarank@3ho.org)

Prenatal Yoga Center New York  
[www.prenatalyogacenter.com](http://www.prenatalyogacenter.com)

Bountiful, Beautiful, Blissful by Gurmukh

Conscious Pregnancy by Tarn Taran Kaur Khalsa (available on lulu.com)  
There is a separate yoga manual by Tarn Taran available on lulu.com, as well

Spiritual Midwifery by Ina May Gaskin

Yoga And Pregnancy By Swami Sivamurti Saraswati

Prenatal and Postnatal Yoga DVD's by Gurmukh

The Divine Mother prenatal Yoga series by Anna Getty