

Antenatal Yoga

A guide to connect with your body and baby

Why Antenatal Yoga?

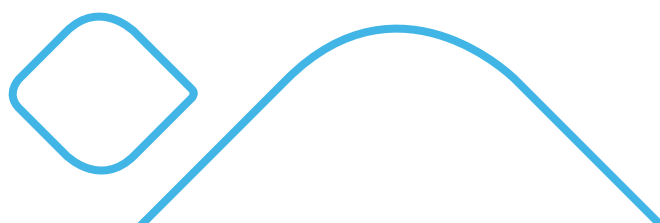
Pregnancy is a wonderful but sometimes challenging time. Growing a baby is hard work. Not only are you physically changing and evolving to carry your growing baby, but you are also going through hormonal changes to support the growth and development of your baby which can, cause headaches, fatigue, nausea, and pain.

- Exercise is a beneficial tool during pregnancy. It can increase fitness, boost mood, increase energy, reduce back and pelvic pain, ease constipation, and prepare you for the delivery of your baby.
- Antenatal yoga is a practice designed to increase strength and flexibility during pregnancy. It is a mind-body-spirit practice combining physical postures, relaxation, and breathing techniques.
- Antenatal yoga differs from traditional yoga, as positions are modified to make the practice comfortable for pregnancy.
- A 2022 study found that antenatal yoga reduced anxiety, depression, and stress. It also reduced the duration of labour and increased the odds of an uncomplicated vaginal delivery and tolerance to pain.
- There isn't a one size fits all approach to prenatal yoga as everybody and every pregnancy is different. As your bump grows, you will need to create more space and use more support.

Please do these exercises with the support of your physiotherapist. You may need an individualised programme. If they cause you pain or your symptoms change, please stop the exercises and liaise with your physiotherapist or midwife.

First Trimester Antenatal Yoga

- You may not notice much of a difference in your exercise tolerance during the first trimester of pregnancy. You may however feel fatigue and nausea. It is therefore important to acknowledge how hard your body is working, even when it's not visible, and be compassionate towards yourself.
- Antenatal yoga can help alleviate early pregnancy symptoms such as fatigue and nausea.
- Make sure you remember to breathe deeply throughout, and drink plenty of water.



1. Mountain Pose

- This pose strengthens, stretches, and lengthens.
- Stand up tall with your knees and feet together.
- Ensure your shoulders are rolled back, away from your ears.
- Slightly lift your chest upwards and allow your arms to relax by your sides.
- Squeeze your thigh, core and bottom muscles.
- Hug your baby with your stomach muscles.
- Allow yourself to gaze gently ahead and focus on breathing gently in and out of your nose.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/Esnyg-hQnc4>

2. Palm Tree Pose with side bend

- This exercise focuses on lengthening and stretching the muscles that run from your hips, all the way to the tips of your fingers.
- Stand nice and tall with your feet together.
- Interlock your fingers, stretch your arms up, keeping the elbows straight and palms facing up.
- Inhale and lift the right side of your body higher, as you press your heels and toes into the ground.
- Whilst exhaling, bend over towards the left.
- Stay in this position for 3-5 breaths.
- To release, take a big breath in, and slowly come back to the centre.
- Repeat on the other side.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/p3LBdlgLr8>

3. Standing Backbend Pose

- Stand with your feet together and take a few breaths.
- Inhale and place the palms of your hands on the lower back close to the hips.
- Exhale and bend backwards, lifting your chest up and out, and shoulders back.
- Only lean back as far as feels comfortable.
- Stay here for about 3 breaths, while keeping your eyes open to gaze up and breathe deeply throwing the chest out with every inhalation.
- Relax out of the pose.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/rftL-Lpuw78>

4. Standing Pelvic Circles

- Stand with your feet a few steps away from each other.
- Inhale and exhale moving the hips in a clockwise direction 3 times.
- Repeat, moving the hips in an anticlockwise direction 3 times.



Video Link: https://youtube.com/shorts/WdotOQqE_5c

5. Chair Pose

- Stand with your feet close together and raise your arms above your head.
- Bend your knees, pretending to sit down.
- Lift your chest and gaze upwards.
- Remain here for 5 long breaths, then slowly come back to standing.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/mUQfHWQ8sIU>

6. Upward Forward Fold against a wall or table

- This exercise will help reduce stress around the hips and the lower back.
- Face a wall or a strong table.
- Bring the feet a bit away from each other for better support and stand and take a few breaths here.
- As you exhale, lean forwards with your torso, and place your hands onto the wall or table for support.
- Pause here and feel a stretch in your lower back, hips, and hamstrings.
- Breathe gently.
- Gently hug your baby by pulling in your belly button.
- If looking down in this pose causes uneasiness, then go slow and look slightly up or avoid bending the torso so much.
- Release slowly moving the torso upwards while releasing the hands from the wall. Relax and repeat again for 4 more rounds of breathing if possible.



7. Hero Pose with a blanket or cushion

- This exercise helps to open the inner thighs.
- Releasing from the standing poses, lower yourself gently down to the floor and sit comfortably on a cushion or rolled up blanket.
- Have a sturdy chair/stool/surface behind you.
- Sit on your heels, lean backwards onto the support behind you, allowing your back to stretch.
- Contract and relax your pelvic floor.
- Release and relax by stretching the legs out completely in front of you and keep the back straight.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/dKbpGffgKF4>

8. Childs Pose with chair or birthing ball

- While seated on a blanket or cushion, spread your knees slightly apart and lean forwards, resting your torso or your head and arms on a sturdy chair or a birthing ball.
- Feel your back muscles opening and stretching.
- Gently contract and relax your pelvic floor muscles.
- If you are comfortable here, remain here for a couple of breaths.



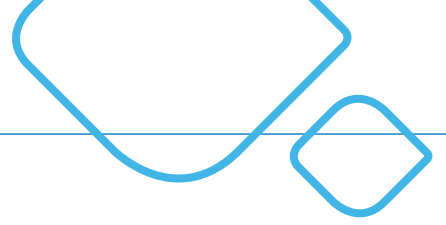
Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/rBq9LH3n5YY>

9. Labour preparation Squat Chair

- Inhale and slowly raise the hips using the support of the chair or sofa.
- Place the right foot on the floor bending the right knee and rest the left knee on the cushion or blanket.
- Place the arms and the face on the supportive surface.
- Here, with the legs slightly apart, breathe slowly and gently.
- After a couple of breaths, swap legs.
- Ensure your legs are not too wide apart, aim for your knees to be above your toes.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/2oMs3d-ezAg>



10. Cat Cow

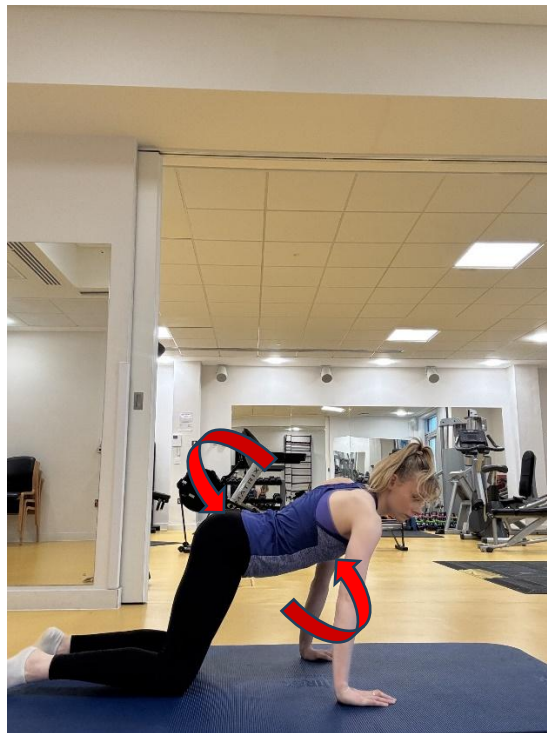
- Gently place yourself on all fours on a mat or on your bed.
- Keep your hands shoulder-width apart and your knees directly below your hips.
- Inhale deeply while curving your lower back and bringing your head up, tilting your pelvis up like a "cow."
- Exhale deeply and bring your abdomen in, arching your spine and bringing your head and pelvis down like a "cat." Repeat several times.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/dbkPxjDEhOk>

11. Hip Circles

- You can do this exercise on a mat or on your bed.
- Begin on all fours with your hands shoulder width apart and knees hip-width apart.
- Gently circle your hips around in one direction while keeping a slight bend in your knees.
- Perform the exercise slowly and enjoy several circles in one direction before you pause and change sides.



Video Link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/0vq9dCN1tVU>

12. Relax

- Bring yourself to rest in a comfortable position. This may be sitting in a chair or lying on your side. You may wish to place a pillow between your knees if you are lying.
- Start to close your eyes and calm your breathing.
- Pause here for a moment to take a rest and be proud of the work you have done.
- You may wish to listen to the pregnancy body scan meditation now (QR code provided at the start of this booklet).
- When you are ready, gently re-awaken, congratulate yourself for the movement you have done, and carry on with your day.



[Pelvic Health Physiotherapy - pregnancy meditation - YouTube](#)

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If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

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