

Basic Guidelines for a Prenatal Class

Encourage prenatal students to:

Listen to their own bodies. This means backing off of a pose or coming out of a pose entirely when it doesn't feel right.

Keep the breath smooth and even. Do not practice any pranayama with breath retentions or holds.

Explore more of their physical strength over their flexibility - yet don't force a pose.

Always make space for the baby - use props such as blocks, blankets and straps.

Keep feet at least hips distance apart.

Practice standing poses with a shorter stance and a wider stance.

Use a wall for standing balancing poses as needed.

Take breaks when needed.

Drink water and take as many bathroom breaks as needed.

Do Savasana on left side supported by a bolster and blankets or propped as Supta Baddha Konasana.

Coming out of Savasana, roll to left side.

Do give a longer Savasana - at least 10-15 minutes.

Encourage prenatal students not to:

Overheat - practice in a cooler room.

Avoid jumping in and out of poses - this includes “floating” to top of mat and into Chatarunga (High/Low Plank).

Do not overstretch (think deep lunges, deep backbends, deep hip openers). The hormone Relaxin helps to “relax” the ligaments at the front of the pelvis to prepare for childbirth. If these get overstretched, the sacrum becomes unstable and the ligaments that have been stretched may not go back. Deep backbends like Urdhva Dhanurasana can overstretch the right and left sides of the rectus abdominis leading to diastasis recti. This can hinder core recovery after birth which could lead to hernias, back pain and hip pain.

Avoid twists or anything that closes the belly space - try open twists instead.

Skip abdominal crunches.

Avoid arm balances that compress the belly space (think Bakasana, Tittibhasana).

Avoid inversions - especially during around weeks 10 - 13. At that time the placenta is attaching to the uterine wall. Viparita Karani is ok.

Avoid lying on belly - especially after first trimester.

Avoid lying on back after about the 4th month. A growing baby can press into the inferior vena cava (vein to the heart) resulting in dizziness in the expectant mother and loss of blood and oxygen to mother and baby.

An expectant mother should avoid squatting after 34 weeks if she knows the baby is in the breach position.

Avoiding squatting if an expectant mother has hemorrhoids.