ANTENATAL AND POST NATAL YOGA PRACTICES

1st TRIMESTER
Ardha Kati Chakrasana Chatushpadasana / Kriya
Trikonasana Vyagrah Pranayama / Chiri Kriya
Nikunja / Balasana Eka / Dwi Pada Uttana Asana
Aswini Mudra Baddhakona Asana / Kriya
Pranava Pranayama Moolabandha

2nd TRIMESTER
Supta Badha Konasana Balasana / Nikunja Asana Moolabandha
Meruasana Badhakonasana Jatraparivritha Asana
Navasana Aswini Mudra Savitri Pranayama

3rd TRIMESTER
Moolabandha and Ashwini Mudra in Baddhakonasana
Chatus Pada Asana & Kriya Vyagrah Pranayama
Kukkriya Pranayama Bhramari Pranayama

POST NATAL
Baddhakona Asana / Kriya Uddiyana Bandha
Chatushpadasana / Kriya Eka / Dwi Pada Uttana asana
Vyagrah Pranayama / Chiri Kriya Navasana
Pavan Mukta Kriya Aswini Mudra
Pranava Pranayama Moolabandha
Shavasana with Savitri Pranayama Surya Pranayama
Meditative practices
YOGA PRACTICES DURING PREGNANCY

1ST TRIMESTER

Ardha Kati Chakrasana  Chatushpadasana / Kriya
Trikonasana  Vyagaha Pranayama / Chiri Kriya
Nikunja / Balasana  Eka / Dwi Pada Uttana Asana
Aswini Mudra  Baddhakona Asana / Kriya
Pranava Pranayama  Moolabandha

ARDHA KATI CHAKRASANA

Stand in a steady Samastihiti Asana with your arms by your side. Breathe in and lift your right arm over your head. Try to extend the arm over your head towards the left as far as possible without bending it. This gives a good stretch to the entire right side of the body. Slowly start to breathe out and lower your arm slowly back to the side. Repeat the practice a few more times. Make sure that you lift your arm on the in breath and lower it on the out breath. Perform the practice on the opposite side and then repeat the entire practice a few more times.

TRIKONASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Place your feet two to three feet apart facing forwards. Turn your head and right foot to the right side and slowly bring your right hand down to the right foot and place the palm of the right hand on the ground in front of the right foot. Look up at the middle finger of the left hand. Let the entire torso get a good twist and stretch. Hold the position for 30 seconds while performing deep Breathing. Perform the practice on the opposite side and then repeat the entire practice a few more times.

NIKUNJA OR BALA ASANA

The baby posture is helpful to relive tensions in the pelvic region and restore the uterus to a healthy position. From a position on all fours relax the elbows to the floor, placing the chest flat down between the elbows. Turn the head to the right side to rest like a baby. Breathe deeply in and out three to six times. Then turn the head to the left side and repeat three to six times more before returning to a heel sitting position in Vajrasana. This position also helps in postural drainage of the lungs and relieves congestion.
CHATUS PADA ASANA
Chatus Pada Asana is an excellent practice for women especially during pregnancy as it relaxes the spine and helps in improving the pelvic circulation. To perform this pose, Sit in an erect Vajrasana and then place both your palms on the ground in front of you. Lift your buttocks off your heels and adjust your hands and feet in such a way that you are in a four footed pose. Your weight should be balanced on your hands and knees thus giving this asana its name. Keep your body parallel to the ground and perform deep and rhythmic breathing. After performing the posture for a comfortable period of time, slowly relax back to the Vajrasana and enjoy the feeling of relief that is produced by this simple yet effective posture.

CHATUS PADA KRIYA
This action is performed by moving around your area in the four footed Chatus Pada Asana. Take up a comfortable Chatus Pada Asana and then slowly move forward on all fours. Then start to move backward a few steps. Take a few steps to your right and then take a few steps to your left. Start to move in a circle around your area in one direction while using all the joints of your arms and legs. Repeat the practice in the opposite direction. Continue moving around in the four footed postures and the when ready slowly relax back to the Vajrasana and then stretch your feet out for some relaxation.

VYAGRAHA PRANAYAMA
The tiger breath is an important practice to relieve numerous musculoskeletal problems and create excellent psychosomatic health.
Take up Chatus Pada Asana with your weight evenly distributed between your hands and knees. Start breathing in and out for an equal count of six. While breathing in slowly lift your head and arch your back downwards. Then breathe out slowly and lower your head while arching your back upwards. Breathe in while lifting your head and arch your back down. Breathe out while lowering your head and arching your back up. Repeat this excellent practice at least nine times at each session.

CHIRI KRIYA
From Chatus Pada Asana take in a long, slow and deep breath and stretch your right leg straight back along the ground. Lift it as high as possible and look up as if performing the Sharabha Asana. On the out breath, let your leg come back down and add an exaggerated high back arch. Continue the movement and draw your right knee in under your chest and lower your head until your forehead touches your knee. Again, breathe in and lift your right leg high into a back arch while lifting your head and then bring your leg down and touch your knee to your knee to your forehead while breathing out.
**EKA PADA UTTANASANA**

From Shava Asana lift your right leg up towards the sky on the in breath. Try not to bend the knee if possible. On the out breath lower the leg back to the ground. Use a breath cycle of in and out for a count of six or eight. Repeat this two more times. Perform the same practice on the left side. Lift your left leg up towards the sky on the in breath. Try not to bend the knee if possible. On the out breath lower the leg back to the ground. Use a breath cycle of in and out for a count of six or eight. Repeat this two more times. After performing the practice at least three times on each side relax in Shava Asana with deep breathing.

**DWI PADA UTTANASANA**

From Shava Asana lift both legs up towards the sky on the in breath. Try not to bend the knees if possible. On the out breath lower the legs back to the ground. Use a breath cycle of in and out for a count of six or eight. Repeat this two more times and then relax in Shava Asana with deep breathing.

Those who have back problems should not do straight leg lifting and should do it with bent knees instead to avoid increasing the strain on the back.

**BADDHAKONA ASANA**

Sit on the ground with your legs stretched out in front. Bend your right knee and bring your right foot inwards until the right heel is close to your perineum. Bend our left knee and bring your left foot in until the soles of both feet are touching each other. Catch hold of your hands. Grip the outer side of your feet and try to make your thighs touch the ground as much as possible. Make sure that your spine is as straight as possible. When ready slowly release the position and stretch your legs forward for a few rounds of deep breathing in the Uttana asana.

**BADDHAKONA KRIYA**

This Kriya or systematic action resembles the fluttering wings of the beautiful butterfly. To perform the Baddhakona asana, keep your hands on your thighs and make your knees go up and down slowly as if they are the wings of a butterfly. Perform a few rounds of this movement and then catch hold of your feet with your hands. Continue the movement of the thighs up and down for a few more rounds. When ready slowly release the position and stretch your legs forward for a few rounds of deep breathing in the Uttana Asana.

**ASHWINI MUDRA**

Ashwini Mudra, the horse gesture is a simple and effective practice that has a wide range of physical, psychological as well as spiritual benefits. This Mudra can be performed from any sitting
position and is done by imposing an anal restraint called Moola Bandha on the external sphincter muscles of the anus and rapidly tensing and releasing the restraint, like the defecating action of a horse (Ashva).

This Ashwini Mudra energizes the entire nervous system and is an excellent preventive and curative practice for hemorrhoids as well as disorders of the rectum, gonads and perineum. It is useful before, during and after pregnancy and childbirth.

**MOOLA BANDHA**

The restraint at the root base of the alimentary canal is accomplished as follows. After the breath is held in or out in a Kumbhaka, the rectal muscles are tensed so that the sphincters of the anus are tightened in an exaggerated manner. Moola Bandha balances the autonomic nervous system in a positive manner, thereby reducing tension. Healthy pelvis tone can be developed by the regular practice of Ashwini Mudra and Moola Bandha.

**PRANAVA PRANAYAMA**

Pranava Pranayama has unlimited healing potential and is useful in virtually all disorders. It brings about harmony of body, emotions and mind.

Adham Pranayama, the abdominal or lower chest breathing. Put the fingers into the Chin Mudra with the index and thumb fingers touching each other at the tips. Keep the other three fingers straight and united. Take a deep breath into the lower chest and abdominal regions...1...2...3...4. Now let out the breath with the sound aaa……

To perform thoracic or mid-chest breathing, the Madhyam Pranayama, curl your fingers inward to form Chinmaya Mudra. Take a deep breath into the mid chest and thoracic regions 1...2...3...4. Now breathe out with the sound ooo…….

Adyam Pranayama is the clavicular or upper chest breathing and utilizes Adhi Mudra. Clench your fists with your thumb in the centre. Keep the Adhi Mudra on your thighs and breathe deeply into the upper chest and clavicular regions 1...2...3...4... Now, exhale with the sound mmm…….

Joining the earlier three parts of the breath in a complete Yogic breath is the fourth stage, known as Mahat Yoga Pranayama. Put the Adhi Mudra with knuckles of your right and left hands touching in front of the navel. This is now known as the Brahma Mudra. Take a deep breath into the low 1...2...mid 3...4...and upper chest 5...6...regions. Now let the breath out with the sounds of aaa...ooo...mmm…….

Relax in Vajrasana and enjoy the feeling of potent healing energy flow through the entire body.
2ND TRIMESTER

Supta Badhakonasana  Balasana / Nikunja Asana  Moolabandha
Meruasana  Badhakonasana  Jatraparivritha asana
Navasana  Aswini Mudra  Savitri Pranayama

SUPTA BADDHAKONA ASANA
Sit on the ground with your legs stretched out in front. Bend your right knee and bring your right foot inwards until the right heel is close to your perineum. Bend our left knee and bring your left foot in until the soles of both feet are touching each other. Catch hold of your hands. Grip the outer side of your feet and try to make your thighs touch the ground as much as possible. Make sure that your spine is as straight as possible. From Badhakonasana gently lie down on your back using the support of the right and then left elbows. Relax in this position for some time with deep breathing. The hands may be placed either on the thighs or by the sides. When ready slowly come back to the sitting position and then stretch your legs forward for a few rounds of deep breathing in the Uttana Asana.

MEHRU ASANA
This head below the heart posture helps to re-orient the flow of energy in the psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine axis. From Samasthiti bend forward and place your palms on the ground. Adjust your feet and perform the mountain posture. Straighten your knees and raise your buttocks up until the soles of both your feet are flat the ground. Keep your hands and feet in parallel so that the right hand and right leg as well as the left hand and leg are in a single line. Try to push your head in towards your abdomen and look at your navel. Perform a few rounds of regular breathing while holding the pose and contemplate the steadiness and might of a huge mountain. When ready release the pose and slowly come back up to the standing posture.

NAVASANA
Lie down in Shavasana with your arms by your sides. While breathing in, slowly come up to the Uttana Asana. Hold in the breath and raise both feet off the ground until the toes are in the line with the nose. This is the Nava asana, the boat Posture. The hands are placed onto the top of the thighs, close in against the body. On an outgoing breath, slowly lower the feet to the ground and then recline back allowing each vertebra of the spine to return to the ground, as though the treads of a caterpillar tractor. The posture is repeated two times before relaxing with deep breathing in Shavasana.
JATHARA PARIVRITTA ASANA

Lie down in Shavasana and stretch both arms out on the respective sides to make a cross like figure. Breathe in and lift your right leg up towards the sky as in the Eka Pada Uttanpada Asana. Breathe out and slowly slide the right leg down until the foot is on the open palm of the right leg down until the foot is on the open palm of the right hand. Try not to bend the knee if possible. Breathe in and turn your head to the left. Breathe out and bring your head back to the centre. Breathe in and lift the right leg back to the original position. Breathe out and lower the leg back down to the ground. Perform the practice on the opposite side and then relax for some time. Repeat the practice two more times. This may be done from a sitting position also as depicted in the picture.

SAVITRI PRANAYAMA IN SHAVASANA

In Savitri Pranayama, the rhythmic breath, each lobular segment of the lungs is filled as in the Mahat Yoga Pranayama, but a held in and a held out breath is added to the breath technique.

The incoming and the outgoing breath should be taken for an equal count, while the held in and the held out breath are only half of that duration time cycle.

If a six count is used for the inspiration and expiration, then a three count should be used for the retained breaths (6*3*6*3). Longer ratios 8*4*8*4 are used later as per physical condition of the person.

NIKUNJA OR BALA ASANA
BADDHAKONA ASANA
BADDHAKONA KRIYA
ASWINI MUDRA
MOOLA BANDHA

refer 1st trimester
refer 1st trimester
refer 1st trimester
refer 1st trimester
refer 1st trimester
3RD TRIMESTER

Chatus Pada Asana & Kriya

Vyagraha Pranayama

Moolabandha and Ashwini Mudra in Baddhakonasana

Kukkriya Pranayama

Bhramari Pranayama

KUKKRIYA PRANAYAMA

Sit in Vajarasana with the weight of your body firmly on both heels. Place your palms on the ground in front with your wrists touching your knees and the fingers pointing forward.

Open your mouth wide and push your tongue out as far as possible. Breathe in and out at a rapid rate with your tongue hanging out of your mouth. After 10 or 15 rounds relax back into Vajrasana and feel the blood flow into the abdominal area. This strengthens the muscles of the abdomen and diaphragm to help in the delivery process. Repeat the whole practice three more times. This may also be introduced earlier in the pregnancy and then the stamina and endurance can be built up more gradually.

BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA

Sit on the heels in the Vajrasana with the spine erect. Perform the Shanmuki Mudra with the thumbs of the hands closing the external auditory canal. The first two fingers are then placed over the closed eyelids while the ring fingers regulate the flow of air through the nostrils. The little fingers are placed over the closed lips. This Mudra helps in joining together the nerves of the hands with the facial and trigeminal nerves on the face.

Take a slow and deep breath in for six counts. Let out the breath very slowly while making a sound in the nasal passages like the high-pitched sound of a female bee. This buzzing sound is very much like the Anuswarah sound of “MM” of the “AUM”. Repeat this at least nine times. Bhramari is one of the Swara Pranayamas and stimulates the glandular secretions and tones up the nervous centres. It is a contemplative prelude to Nada Yoga. It is an excellent stress buster and creates psychosomatic harmony that produces health and healing at all levels. An excellent way to induce healthy vibrations in both mother and child.

Chatus Pada Asana & Kriya  refer above

Vyagraha Pranayama  refer above

Moolabandha and Ashwini Mudra in Baddhakonasana  refer above
POSTNATAL

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Meditative practices

UDDIYANA BANDHA

To perform Uddiyana Bandha, the fly up neuromuscular lock, take up comfortable stance with your legs a few feet apart. Bend forward slightly and place your palms on the respective thighs keeping your elbows straight. Take in a deep breath and then blast it out through your mouth to empty your lungs as much as possible. Pull in the abdominal wall and pull it back as if trying to touch the vertebral column. This produces a concave depression in the abdomen. Hold this position as long as comfortable. When ready, inhale solely and relax the abdominal wall back to its original portion. Rest for some time in Samastithi Asana and then repeat the practice two more times.

PAWAN MUKTA ASANA

Lie down in a comfortable Shavasana and start to breathe in and out for an equal count of six or eight. To perform the single legged Eka Pada Pawan Mukta Asana bend and lift your right knee while breathing in and simultaneously also lift your head off the ground. Catch hold of your knee with your arms and try to touch your knee to your forehead. Hold the position a few seconds and then while breathing out slowly release the position and lower your head while at the same time bringing your foot back to the ground. Repeat this at least two more times to complete a set of three rounds of the practice.

Relax a few seconds in the Shavasana and then perform the practice on the left side. Relax in Shavasana for a few minutes with deep and rhythmic breathing while concentrating on your abdominal area that will help to relax you further.

To perform the double legged Dwi Pada Pawan Mukta Asana bend and lift both your knees while breathing in. Bring them as close to your forehead as possible while simultaneously raising your head to meet the knees. Hold a few seconds and then while breathing out, lower your head and simultaneously bring your feet back to the ground.

Repeat this two more times to complete a set of three rounds at each session.

Relax in Shavasana for a few minutes with deep and rhythmic breathing while concentrating on your abdominal area. This will help you to relax even further as the emotional tensions tend to tighten up the abdominal area leading to a feeling of “butterflies in the stomach”.

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**VAKRA ASANA**

Sit erect with your legs stretched out in the Uttana Asana. Bend your right knee and place the right foot by the side of the left knee. Turn to your right and place your right hand on the ground behind you to support your erect position. Bring your left arm round the outer side of the right knee and catch hold of the right big toe. The left shoulder blade rests on the outer side of the upright right knee.

Turn your head and look back over your right shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your torso as straight as possible. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

Repeat the practice on the opposite side and hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

**SURYA PRANAYAMA**

Sit in Vajra Asana and perform Nasargha Mudra with your right hand. Close your left nostril with your ring finger. Inhale slowly through your right nostril for a count of 6. Exhale through the right nostril for a count of 6. Keep your left nostril closed at all times during the practice. Breathe in 2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out 2-3-4-5-6. Repeat the Surya Nadi Pranayama for a minimum of nine rounds at each sitting.

This Pranayama helps speed up metabolism and burns up extra fat that has accumulated over the past 9 months of pregnancy. With regular practice the breath count can be increased to a 6 in and 12 out pattern.

The Surya Nadi Pranayama should be performed 27 rounds before breakfast, before lunch, before dinner and before going to bed at night. The Surya Nadi Pranayama can also be done from the Surya Nadi Asana that is done from a lying down position. From the supine position turn onto your left side with your right side dominant. Bend your left arm and use it as a pillow. After some time, the flow of the breath will slowly become a right nostril dominant flow that mimics the Surya Nadi Pranayama. This right dominant body position promotes a healthy metabolic activity even as we either rest or sleep at night.

**Surya Nadi Pranayama should be avoided in patients of high blood pressure and high blood sugar as it may worsen the condition.**

**SHAVASANA WITH SAVITRI PRANAYAMA**

Lie supine on the ground with your head preferably to the north enabling your body to be in alignment with the earth’s electromagnetic field. Make sure that your head and body are in a straight line while your hands are kept relaxed by your side with the palms facing upwards. Bring your feet together and then let your forefeet fall away into a ‘v’ shape with your heels as close together as possible.

Start to consciously watch your breath by letting your awareness settle in the abdominal area. Feel the abdominal movements as your abdomen rises as you breathe in and falls as you breathe out.

After a few rounds of this practice, slowly let your awareness settle at the tip of your nose. Feel the cool inspired air flowing into your nostrils as you breathe in and become aware of the warm expired air flowing out of the nostrils when you breathe out. Consciously regulate your breath so that the duration of the incoming and outgoing breathes are equal. The inspiration and expiration can be for a count of 4 or 6
initially and then with practice elongated to a count of 8 or 10. Perform at least nine rounds of this conscious deep breathing and enjoy the relaxed sensation that spreads throughout your body. The relaxation in Shavasana can be further depended by utilizing the Savitri Pranayama to relax and rejuvenate your body, emotions and mind. Breathe in through your nose for a count of 6. Hold in the breath for a count of 3. Breathe out through your nose for a count of 6. Finally hold the breath out for a count of 3. Make sure that you are breathing in and out through both nostrils and that you are using the complete Yogic breathing. Perform at least 9 rounds of this combination practice that heightens the relaxation to a very deep level.

After performing 10 to 15 minutes of the Shavasana slowly start to move your fingers and toes. Perform conscious stretching and make a smooth transition from the relaxed to the active state. Lift your left arm over your head and turn over onto your left side. Continue the turning action until you come into the face-prone posture. Perform Makara Asana by placing your right hand on the left while the left is placed palm down on the ground in front of you. Keep your forehead or chin on your right hand while keeping your legs a foot apart. Bring your hands forward near your shoulders and push yourself back into the Bhujanga Asana. Continue the back bending movement and go into the four footed Chatus Pada Asana. Relax into the Shashanga Asana with your arms stretched out in front and then finally come back to the Vajrasana. With your palms on your thighs sit quietly for some time and enjoy the effects of the deep relaxation that has spread to every part of your body.

**PRANA DHARANA - BREATH AWARENESS:**

Sit in Vajrasana or lie down in Shava Asana. Begin to be aware of your breathing and how the air passes down from the nostrils into the lungs and then back out the nostrils. Feel the abdominal movements as the abdomen rises with the in breath and falls with the out breath. Let your awareness settle in the abdomen. Feel the cool inspired air flowing into the nostrils and the warm expired air flowing out of the nostrils. Let your awareness settle at the tip of the nose. Consciously regulate the breath so that the ratio of insp: exp is equal. It can be a 4,6,8 or 10 count. Perform nine rounds of this practice.

**MINDFULNESS BASED MEDITATION**

One of the most productive of the many forms of “quiet sitting”, popularly grouped under the heading of meditation is the mindfulness based awareness of one’s thoughts. This is to be done without identifying with the thoughts and without either justifying or condemning them.

Take up a straight back sitting position and sit facing to the North or East in the early morning. Keep your mind as placid as possible, as this is the important feature of the early morning meditation. Breathe slowly and rhythmically, but very quietly. Do not upset the peace. Hold your mind concentrated inside your head at a point in line with the eyebrows. Relax. Don’t attempt to force visualization, simply be alert and expectant.

Presently, you will have the sensation of movement within the head, as though watching a “ticker tape” of your thoughts. The thoughts will be in extreme slow motion. Observe the thoughts. Don’t get emotionally involved with them, just watch them. You will actually be able to see your thoughts, as well as hear them. Usually, the thoughts are quite mundane, but benign. Simply observe them, passively and dispassionately.
OM JAPA

Take up any meditative posture and start to perform the Savitri Pranayama in a 6 by 3 or 8 by 4 rhythm. Make an audible Pranava OM in the Bindu Nadi. With Japa-Ajapa, make silent intonation of the Pranava OM concentrating at this same point. Do not let the mind waver away from either a conscious repetition of the Mantra OM, as Japa, or as the silent Ajapa.

AJAPA JAPA

Take up any meditative posture and start to perform the Savitri Pranayama in a 6 by 3 or 8 by 4 rhythm. As you breathe in listen to the sound of SAH made as the breath enters your respiratory passages. As you breathe out listen to the sound of HUM that is made as the breath leaves your respiratory passages. Concentrate on this Ajapa Japa of HAMSA SO HAM in tune with the breath.

Baddhakona Asana / Kriya  refer above
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