

Yoga In Pregnancy: A Healthy Approach To A New Beginning

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ABSTRACT :-

Yoga in pregnancy is multi dimensional physical, mental, emotional and intellectual preparation to answer the challenges faced by a pregnant woman. The challenges of pregnancy are revealed by the state of happiness and stress while yoga is a skill to calm down the mind. Pregnancy in a woman is a condition in which woman changes both from inside as well as outside. These changes create obstacles or hurdles in the normal life of a pregnant woman and yoga in pregnancy can help the women to cruise through these changes and challenges. Practicing yoga during pregnancy provides a great range of activity and benefits to unborn child and mother by numerous ways. Yoga soothes the mind, refocus the energy and prepare the woman physiologically and psychologically for labour. Different breathing techniques impart invaluable neuro-muscular control and helps in coordinated relaxation and contraction of uterus.

Different type of asanas (postures),are described in Ayurveda and Yoga darshan texts which can be performed by a pregnant woman as they consume low energy and provide greater benefits.

Published articles and different studies with references have been considered to support the effect of yoga in pregnancy. Yoga practicing includes physical postures and breathing techniques which minimizes the complication of pregnancy, like pregnancy induced hypertension, intrauterine growth retardation and pre-term delivery etc. Western exercises bring about what is known as phase contraction of muscles while yogic exercises create a static contraction which maintains a muscle under tension without causing repeated motions [1] . An approach to yoga in pregnancy can improve birth weight; decrease pre-term labour, decreased IUGR with least or no complications.

KEY WORDS :- Pregnancy, Yoga, Asanas, Pranayama, Birth weight, stress

INTRODUCTION – Yoga is an ancient discipline designed to bring balance and health to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of the individual [2]. On the counter part pregnancy is an integral part of life of a woman which changes her physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually for rest of her life. To balance all these dimensions yoga can be postulated as requisite for normal and complication free pregnancy. Pregnancy in a woman is a condition in which woman changes both from inside as well as outside. Fear and apprehension often cloud the mind, the moment pregnancy is confirmed. Child birth is surely the greatest act performed by the woman. It can be great emotional experience.

The physical and psychological aspects cannot be separated. For most of women, labour is a time of apprehension of fear and agony. These changes create obstacles or hurdles in the normal life of a pregnant woman and yoga in pregnancy can help the woman to cruise through these changes and challenges [3]. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecology (ACGO) recommends that women with low risk pregnancy participate in moderate intensity physical activity for 30 min. or more each day on most, if not all, days of the week [4]. But there is lack of attention towards antenatal physical and mental stress of women in India due to late antenatal check- up and myths related to physical activity of a pregnant woman.

glands to function more efficiently leading in turn to overall development of body and mind and to maintain physical strength. It has

Currently only 15.1% of pregnant women exercise or practice yoga at the recommended level [5] which is significantly lower than the general population of 45% in U.S [6] in respect to the above mentioned data the percentage rate of recommended physical activity and yoga is considered to be low in India. Benefit of practicing yoga during pregnancy. Yoga provides a great range of activity to unborn child and mother by numerous ways. Yoga soothes the mind, refocus the energy and prepare the woman psychologically for labour. Various asanas create more space in pelvis which eases the expulsion of fetus. Number of poses can assist or speed up the process of labour by reliving tension around cervix and birth canal [7], and recovery after the delivery as well. Different breathing techniques impart invaluable coordinated relaxation and contraction of uterus. Proper antenatal preparation by yoga and dhyana (meditation) can help the majority of women to have a labour that is easy and safe so that she can enjoy the labour and experience a sense of fulfillment. As yoga is the cultural part of our life and it should be indulge in the pregnancy routine.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION, SELECTION AND EFFECT ON ASANS

– Yogasana is to assume a certain bodily position in order to encourage various vital organs and endocrine

established by their use in OPD patient regimen. Regimen for Yogasanas is divided in three categories according to trimesters.

capacity to produce higher quality of conception, healthy maternal environment for pregnancy and more harmonious birthing experience [8] . Different type of asanas (postures), are described in Ayurveda and Yoga darshan text which can be performed by a pregnant woman as they consume low energy and provide greater benefits. The benefits of these asanas are well

First trimester asanas - Practice basic poses with a few modifications. Avoid inversions, closed twists and back bends that might compress the uterus or over stretch it which causes low blood circulation to uterus. Encourage a long relaxation phase after exercise [9] .

TABLE NO. 1 [9] : FIRST TRIMESTER ASANAS

| Sr. No. | Asanas (Postures) | |
|---------|---|---|
| 1. | Utthitatrikasan (Extended triangle pose) | It strengthens the pelvic floor muscles, thighs and calf muscles. Increases the flexibility of spine and improves digestion [9] . |
| 2. | Virbhadrasan (Warrior pose) | It stretches the groin area, strengthens the body and back muscles and tones up the lower body. Increases stamina and flexibility and relieves backache [9] . |
| 3. | Vrikshasan (Tree pose) | It stretches the legs, back and arms which invigorates the body. It helps to improve concentration [9] . |

Second trimester asanas - Avoid lying on back because it reduces blood circulation to uterus and poses that stretch the muscles too much. In second trimester the centre of gravity starts shifting to right, so all standing poses with these asanas are well

your heel against the wall for support should be done. While twisting, move shoulders and back rather than waist, to avoid the unnecessary pressure on abdomen.

TABLE NO. 2 [10] : SECOND TRIMESTER ASANAS

| Sr. No. | Asanas (Postures) | |
|---------|--|---|
| 1. | Vajrasan (Thunderbolt pose) | This asana enhances digestive system which increases the energy uptake. Alters blood flow and nervous system impulses in the pelvic region. Relieves stomach ailments like hyperacidity and it is the only asana that can be practiced after taking meals [10]. |
| 2. | Matsyakridasan (Flapping fish pose) | Stimulates digestion and relieves constipation. It relaxes the nerves of legs and this is an ideal asana for relaxed sleep. It improves blood circulation [10] . |
| 3. | Marjariasan (Cat stretch pose) | Is very helpful in toning the female reproductive system and muscles of pelvis. This asana increases the flexibility of neck, spine and shoulders muscles which are essential for bearing down efforts during labour [10] . |
| 4. | Tadasan (Mountain pose) | Stretches the entire spine and helps to clear the congestion of spinal nerves. It also helps in developing physical and mental balance. It stretches and strengthens the rectus - abdominus muscle which an accessory muscle for bearing down [10] . |
| 5. | Bhadrasan (Gracious pose) | This asana benefits the digestive system and helps in relieving various stomach ailments. It helps in toning the muscles of female pelvic region. Along with meditation, it relieves mental stress [10] . |
| 6. | Kati chakras an (waist rotating pose) | Tones up the muscles of waist, back and hips. It induces the feeling of lightness and relieves physical and mental stress [10] . |

Third trimester asanas - Practice only those asanas which do not exert pressure on

abdomen wall. Supine poses should be avoided.

TABLE NO. 3 [10] : THIRD TRIMESTER ASANAS

| Sr. No. | Asanas (Postures) | |
|---------|--|---|
| 1. | Ardhatitaliasan (Half butterfly) | Is an excellent asana for loosening of hip joints, which enables fast and easy delivery [10] . |
| 2. | Pornatitaliasan (Full butterfly) | Tones up pelvic girdle. It is relieves the tension from inner thigh muscles and removes the tiredness of legs. This asana increases the stretching ability of perineum [10] . |
| 3. | Chakkichalanasan (Churning mill pose) | Is an excellent asana for toning the nerves and muscles of pelvis and abdomen and prepare them for delivery. |
| 4. | Utthanasan (Squat and Rise pose) | This asana strengthens the muscles of back, uterus, thighs and ankles. It tones up the pelvic girdle and this asana is equivalent to sweeping floor. Thus enables fast and easy delivery. |

The practice of yogasanas essentially tends to exercise and relax almost all muscles of the body to prepare it for a prolonged steady, stable and co-ordinate activity without producing fatigue [8] .

Pranayam (Breathing Technique) – Pranayam is not only helpful in pregnancy but is a gift given by Ayurveda to human race for long life. Pranayam is practice of complete, prolonged

and slow breathing. It works on both mind and soul. Pranayam provides extra oxygen to every cell which energizes and rejuvenates them. It should be practiced every day. It tones up the nervous system, improves emotional stability and helps to eliminate anxiety, fears and phobia. It improves breathing capacity and also increases stamina and vitality.

TABLE NO. 4

| Sr. No. | Asanas (Postures) | |
|---------|-----------------------|--|
| 1. | Anulom Vilom Pranayam | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It strengthens the body mentally as well as physically. • During labour, holding of breath for maximum duration can provide great help for pushing during labour. • It provides more oxygen to the body so more oxygen is transferred to the fetus. |
| 2. | Bhramaripranayam | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the effective breathing exercise to release agitation, anger and calms the mind. • It is very useful for pregnant women because it eases the process of childbirth by controlling the breathing during the process of labour. • It improves concentration and removes toxin from body [11] . |

Dhyana (Meditation) - Dhyana is an integral part of yoga. It is a practice in which an individual trains the mind which includes techniques designed to promote relaxation and build internal energy. Its goal is to increase focus and calms the mind, eventually reaching a higher level of awareness. It helps us to achieve harmonious balance between body and mind. To practice dhyana one should

sit with straight and erect spine and focus on to something e.g. OM (the famous mantra). During initial stages dhyana should be practiced for about 8 to 10 minutes, after that it can be extended as per capacity. Meditation should be avoided after a heavy meal. Yoga mudras are hand positions that help to stimulate different energies in the body.

DISCUSSION – Yoga practices includes physical postures breathing techniques which minimizes the complication of pregnancy, like pregnancy induced hypertension, intrauterine growth retardation and pre-term delivery. Practicing yoga is helpful in increasing the birth weight of babies. According to a study the birth weight in women practicing yoga group (2.78 +/- 0.52 kg) is significantly higher ($p < 0.018$) than control group (2.55 +/- 0.52kg) [14] . Another study reveals that the babies with birth weight greater than or equal to 2500g was significantly higher ($p < 0.01$) in the yoga group. Rate of preterm labour is lower ($p < 0.0006$) in the yoga practicing group. Complications such as isolated intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR $p < 0.025$) and pregnancy induced hypertension (PIH) with associated IUGR ($p < 0.025$) were also significantly lower in the group of patient practicing yoga and there is no significant adverse effect is noted [15] . Pranayam (Breathing exercise) and Dhyana (Meditation) relaxes the mind refocuses the energy and relieve stress from impatient and tensed pregnant woman. A study reveals that a single and multi sessions of antenatal yoga on

measures of moods suggest that antenatal yoga lowered state of anxiety and cortisol levels after a single session and this effect was consistent over time. Antenatal yoga was associated with significant reduction in fear of childbirth and is potentially preventive against increases in depression symptoms [16] . Yoga is the practice which includes different asanas, pranayama (Breathing exercise) and dhyana (Meditation) and their beneficial effects are mentioned here below.

Asanas (Postures)

1. It strengthens the pelvic floor muscles and reduces muscle cramps during third trimester.
2. Increases the flexibility of spine.
3. Tones up the lower body.
4. Increases stamina and relieves backache.
5. Improves digestion and relieves constipation.
6. Improves blood circulation and induce relax sleep.
7. Strengthens the bearing down muscles and helps in the expulsion of fetus.
8. Relieves physical and mental stress.

Pranayam (Breathing exercise)

1. Provides extra oxygen to every cell and rejuvenates them.
2. Tones up nervous system and improves emotional stability.
3. Relieves morning sickness and mood swings.

4. Eliminate anxiety, fear and phobia.
5. Increases breathing capacity, stamina and vitality which help in bearing down during the process of labour.

Yog mudras

1. Facilitate contractions.
2. Effective in relieving nausea, flatulence and feeling of fullness during pregnancy
3. Control intentions for pregnancy to stay positive and healthy.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of above mention studies an approach to yoga in pregnancy can improve birth weight, decrease pre-term labour, decreased intra uterine growth retardation (IUGR) with least or no complications. Practicing yoga reduces the mental stress; manage pain and symptoms of depression. So, Yoga must be included in the pregnancy regime to attain the higher level of fitness for both mother and child.

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