

# YOGA<sup>TM</sup> MAGAZINE

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HEAL YOUR BODY & MIND

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POSTNATAL  
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# NURTURE YOURSELF

## THE BENEFITS OF POSTNATAL YOGA FOR NEW MOMS

Words: Ingrid Yang, M.D., E-RYT-500

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As a new mother, caring for your little one can leave you feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. But did you know that practising postnatal yoga can help you find balance, reduce stress, and promote physical healing?

The postpartum period, aka the “fourth trimester,” is the time after giving birth that is full of transitions; physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. While time can be filled with *santosha* with your new bundle of joy’s arrival, this time also comes with unique physical and emotional challenges. A dedicated yoga practice can help new mothers navigate these challenges with divine grace.

## BENEFITS OF POSTNATAL YOGA

Yoga can be a great way for new moms to recover from childbirth and strengthen the pelvic floor complex. Practising yoga poses like pelvic tilts, cat-cow, and bridge pose can help new moms regain strength in the pelvic floor muscles, which become weakened during pregnancy and childbirth. Additionally, practising yoga can help regain core strength, which can be especially helpful for moms who have *diastasis recti*, a separation of the abdominal muscles.

Additionally, yoga can help alleviate common postpartum discomforts like back pain and fatigue. Practising gentle yoga poses helps improve posture and reduce back pain, while pranayama may help increase energy levels and reduce fatigue. Furthermore, yoga practice is a great way to reduce stress and anxiety, which is common in the postpartum period, and also improve overall mental and emotional well-being.

Postnatal yoga may also provide a range of emotional benefits. One of the key benefits is stress reduction, as the practice of yoga helps to activate the body’s relaxation response and reduce feelings of anxiety and tension. Perhaps most importantly, practising yoga can be a way to cultivate self-care and self-compassion, as it provides an opportunity to focus on

your own physical and emotional well-being amidst the demands of caring for a new baby.

## GETTING STARTED

When first starting postnatal yoga, it is most important to start slowly and listen to your body, as your postpartum recovery may take some time. It’s also a good idea to consult with your healthcare provider before beginning any new exercise program.

When it comes to finding a local class, many yoga studios offer postnatal classes specifically for new moms, so it’s worth checking out what’s available in your area. Alternatively, practising at home is a convenient option, and there are many online resources and videos available that cater to postnatal yoga.

If you want to practise at home, below is a fun and easy sequence to get you started at home!



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## POSTNATAL SEQUENCE

### CAT-COW (MARJARIASANA- BITILASANA)

Cat-Cow warms up in the spine and helps to gently stretch and strengthen the abdominal and pelvic muscles, which is particularly important after childbirth. Start in a Table-top position with your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Inhale to lower your belly, tilt your tailbone slightly upward, and lift your chest while gazing toward the sky for Cow. Exhale while tucking your pelvis downward, rounding your spine and drawing your chin toward your chest for Cat. Alternative moving between Cat and Cow with your breath for 5 cycles.





### **CHILD'S POSE (BALASANA)**

This gentle pose can be a great way to relax and release tension in your back and hips, which is particularly helpful for new moms who may experience discomfort or pain in these areas. From Cat-Cow, sit back on your heels and either reach your arms overhead or rest them alongside your body. Place a block or pillow under your head and a blanket under your knees if it provides more comfort. Hold for 5-10 breath cycles.



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### **BRIDGE POSE (SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA)**

This pose strengthens the gluteus and lower back muscles, which can be particularly helpful for new moms who may experience back pain after childbirth. Roll onto your back from Child's Pose and walk your feet under your knees. Keeping your shoulders and the back of your head on the ground, raise your hips as you roll up to your shoulder blades. Interlace your fingers behind your back or hold onto a strap, which adds a gentle stretch for your chest and shoulders. Hold for 3-5 breath cycles, then roll slowly down your spine onto your pelvis.





### **SPHINX POSE (SALAMBA BHUJANGASANA)**

This fun pose is perfect for bonding with your baby while also strengthening your back muscles. Lay your baby down on your mat, facing up towards you. Bring your forearms to the mat on both sides of your baby, dropping your abdomen and pelvis to the ground. Press into your forearms and lift your heart for a chest opening as you inhale. Relax down bringing your face close to your baby's face on your exhale. Cycle through your inhalations and exhalations 3-5 times.

### **KNEES-TO-CHEST POSE (PAVANAMUKTASANA)**

This pose is another fun way to play and bond with your baby while also stretching your hips and inner thighs. Begin with your baby at your chest, roll onto your back and bring your knees up towards your chest. Lie your baby across your shins, holding him or her at the waist or under the armpits. Hold the pose here, or rock gently side to side for 5-10 breath cycles.







### **BOUND ANGLE POSE (BADDHA KONASANA)**

In addition to stretching your hips and lower back, this pose can be a gentle way to soothe your baby while also stretching your hips and lower back. Sit on the ground with the soles of your feet pressed together. Place your baby in front of your feet within the diamond of your legs, keeping your sides long as you fold forward towards them. Hold for 5-10 breath cycles.





### DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING (PRANAYAMA)

Diaphragmatic breathing can help new moms to relax, reduce stress and anxiety, and even improve core strength. To practise diaphragmatic breathing, sit or lie down in a comfortable position and place both hands on the bottom of your ribcage. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, feeling your belly expand as you breathe in. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, feeling your belly contract slightly as you breathe out. Repeat this breathing pattern for several minutes, focusing on the feeling of your breath moving in and out of your body. As you practise this breathing exercise, soften your shoulders and allow any tension you may be holding in your body to be released. Additionally, practising this pranayama while feeding your baby can also add a sense of reassuring calmness to you both.







### **SAVASANA (FINAL RESTING POSE)**

This pose, also known as Corpse Pose, can be a relaxing way to end a yoga practice and allow your mind and body to fully unwind and release tension. Allow yourself to fully let go and cultivate a sense of inner calm and peace. This time is your time – a respite from your duties as a mom and your moment for self-care.

Overall, the most important aspect of postnatal yoga is to approach your practice with patience, self-compassion, and a willingness to adapt to your body's changing needs. Whether you're a seasoned yogi or a complete beginner, postnatal yoga can be an invaluable tool for new moms. By taking care of yourself with love and awareness, you'll be better equipped to take care of your little one.

**Ingrid Yang** MD, JD, C-IAYT, E-RYT500 is a physician, yoga therapist, freelance writer and published author. She has been teaching yoga for over 20 years and is the author of the books *Adaptive Yoga* and *Hatha Yoga Asanas*. Dr. Yang leads trainings and retreats all over the world, with a special focus on kinesthetic physiology and healing through breathwork, meditation and mind-body connection.

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