

*The Six Directions of the Spine*

# YOGA FOR A HEALTHY SPINE

*For Mamas and Mamas-To-Be*



**KRISTY S. RODRIGUEZ**

*Pure Nurture: Creating a Healthy New Life*

# Yoga For a Healthy Spine

## For Mamas and Mamas-to-be

by Kristy S. Rodriguez  
Pure Nurture, LLC



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# THE SIX DIRECTIONS OF THE SPINE

Back pain is the number one complaint in most pre & postnatal yoga classes.

Keep your spine healthy by moving in the six directions of the spine on a daily basis. These three yoga postures will only take five minutes out of your day. Practice these postures after waking up in the morning, right before you go to bed at night, or anytime during the day when you need a little break.

These yoga poses will increase circulation and relax the muscles in the back. By adding in deep breathing while practicing these postures you will also release built up tension and increase the relaxation response in both the body and the mind. (Great for you and baby!)

# CAT/COW POSE



This is an all-time favorite of pregnant mamas, because it does so many good things: develops strength and increases energy, helps to relieve tension in the back, and also encourages the baby to move into the ideal birthing position (during pregnancy).

To begin, come into a tabletop position on the floor, knees under your hips (hip-width apart) and hands under your shoulders with fingers spread wide like starfish. Gently micro-bend your elbows to bring the weight of your body into your muscles and out of your joints, then turn your elbows slightly inward so that pits of your elbows are facing each other. Your drishti is on the floor, either between or just in front of your hands, allowing your neck to be an extension of your spine. Inhale deeply. As you exhale, lift and round your spine toward the ceiling, gently hugging your baby in. As you're doing this, tuck your chin into your chest (cat pose). Next, inhale as you drop your belly toward the floor, bringing your head up and lifting your chest toward the front of the room. Your spine is now arched, with your tailbone lifting toward the ceiling (cow pose). Repeat five times (one cat and one cow represent one repetition). Let your breath lead you from one posture to the other, ensuring that you never hold or restrict the breath.

# SEATED SIDE BEND



This posture is beneficial for opening up the side body, releasing tension in the neck and stretching the Latissimi dorsi (commonly known as "lats"). Mamas-to-be often feel the pressure of their baby pushing in the area under the chest at the top of the rib cage. Side stretches can create space, opening and relief in this area. This stretch benefits the back, neck, obliques, and shoulders. This posture also helps to relieve stress and anxiety, calming the body and mind.

To begin, sit in a comfortable crossed leg position (Easy Pose). Ground your hips into the floor or folded blanket. Place your right hand on the floor next to your body (you don't need to place your forearm on the floor as shown in photo above.) Stretch your left arm over your head toward the right side. Gaze can be down to the floor, straight ahead or up toward the ceiling. Allow your left shoulder to relax away from your ear, creating space for the shoulder and neck. Hold here for three to five deep slow breaths.

Inhale both arms up to the ceiling. Place your left hand to the floor. And repeat the above instructions on this side.

Repeat two times on each side. Breathe slowly and deeply.

# SEATED TWIST



Seated twists help to relieve tension in the back. As you practice a seated twist during pregnancy, the most important aspect of this pose is to keep your belly facing forward. Never twist the belly during pregnancy, only twist from the upper back and shoulders. If you are not pregnant, you may twist through the entire spine.

To begin, come to a comfortable seated position (Easy Pose). Bring your hands to your thighs. Inhale deeply as you lengthen through the spine, sitting up tall. As you exhale, place your left hand on your right knee. Place your right hand behind you and twist to your right. Look over your right shoulder. Hold for three to five deep breaths.

Come back to center. Inhale deeply then exhale, place your right hand on left knee. Left hand presses in the floor behind you as you look over your left shoulder. Hold for three to five deep breaths. On an exhale, come back to center.

Note: During pregnancy, keep your belly button center. As you twist, take a peek at your belly to be sure it is still facing forward.

Yoga can create space where there was compression, can make open what was closed and can make soft our hard and abrasive edges.

The process of pregnancy itself opens and expands our hearts and our capacity to love.

-Tara Lee, Pregnancy Health Yoga



# CONNECT WITH KRISTY



Kristy S. Rodriguez, pre- and postnatal wellness expert and advocate, is the owner and founder of Pure Nurture, LLC, which is devoted to educating and inspiring women to nurture and nourish themselves through pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period. As a Holistic Health Coach and Registered Yoga Teacher specializing in pre- and postnatal wellness, Kristy works with individual clients, as well as teaching classes and workshops, both in person and online.

Her passion for prenatal health and wellness began while she was pregnant with her first daughter. After her pregnancy with her second daughter, she decided to dedicate her work to supporting women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, as well as mothers of newborns. With her cumulated years of experience in education and health, she brings extensive knowledge, personal experience, and deep compassion to her students. In a supportive, non-judgmental way, Kristy helps her clients and students live healthier, happier, more energetic lives.

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[info@purenurture.com](mailto:info@purenurture.com)