

PRENATAL YOGA

# Nurture body, mind and baby through prenatal yoga

By **BONNIE YONKER**  
SPECIAL TO FEELING FIT

Whether you are new to yoga or an experienced practitioner, prenatal yoga is the perfect way to nurture body, baby and mind during your pregnancy.

Pregnancy, labor and childbirth are some of the most challenging and rewarding stages of a woman's life. Moms-to-be are turning to classes like prenatal yoga with increasing frequency to develop the tools needed to take them on with focus, strength, and grace. Practicing yoga during pregnancy, in gentle classes that are designed with expectant mothers in mind, is a wonderful way to stay fit throughout your pregnancy, while preparing your body and mind for the demands of labor, birth and motherhood.

Prenatal yoga utilizes an exploration of yoga poses (asanas), breathwork (pranayama), meditation and deep relaxation techniques to create a strong foundation — both physical and mental — for the journey through pregnancy and birth. Yoga postures in these classes are de-

signed to open the hips, release lower back pain, improve balance and increase flexibility, making the pregnancy more comfortable and conditioning the body for easier delivery.

In addition to these physical benefits, prenatal yoga cultivates confidence, composure and calm at a time that can be stressful for many. Yoga during pregnancy helps practitioners develop mental strength and focus, while teaching powerful breathing techniques that bring a plentiful supply of oxygen to the baby and will assist during labor.

Expectant mothers will also develop an understanding of meditation, which helps foster a connection between mother and child, and strategies for deep relaxation, like Yoga Nidra (yogic sleep), that will help the mind and body to prepare for childbirth.

The benefits of a prenatal yoga practice go well beyond your physical and mental well-being.

Taking part in prenatal yoga classes is the perfect way to meet other expectant mothers and become part of a community that can embark upon the adventure of motherhood together, and support each other through the challenges of pregnancy and parenting. Yoga during pregnancy also deepens your relationship with your unborn baby.

In the months leading up to birth, many mothers-to-be are so consumed with frantically preparing for their child's arrival that they forget to enjoy the special time before the baby is born. Maintaining a yoga practice during pregnancy provides an opportunity to slow down, reflect, and nurture the unique relationship, both physical and spiritual, between mother and child.

The Yoga Sanctuary offers several options for the mothers-to-be, from small group classes to private sessions. The next prenatal yoga series begins on Nov. 2.

Bonnie Yonker is the owner of The Yoga Sanctuary and is certified in prenatal yoga.

For more information, visit <http://www.theyogasanctuary.biz> or call 941-505-YOGA (9642). The Yoga Sanctuary is located at 112 Sullivan St. in Punta Gorda.



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