

Tara Lee will be answering your questions about pregnancy and yoga in her new monthly column. Send any questions for Tara to [info@yogamagazine.co.uk](mailto:info@yogamagazine.co.uk)

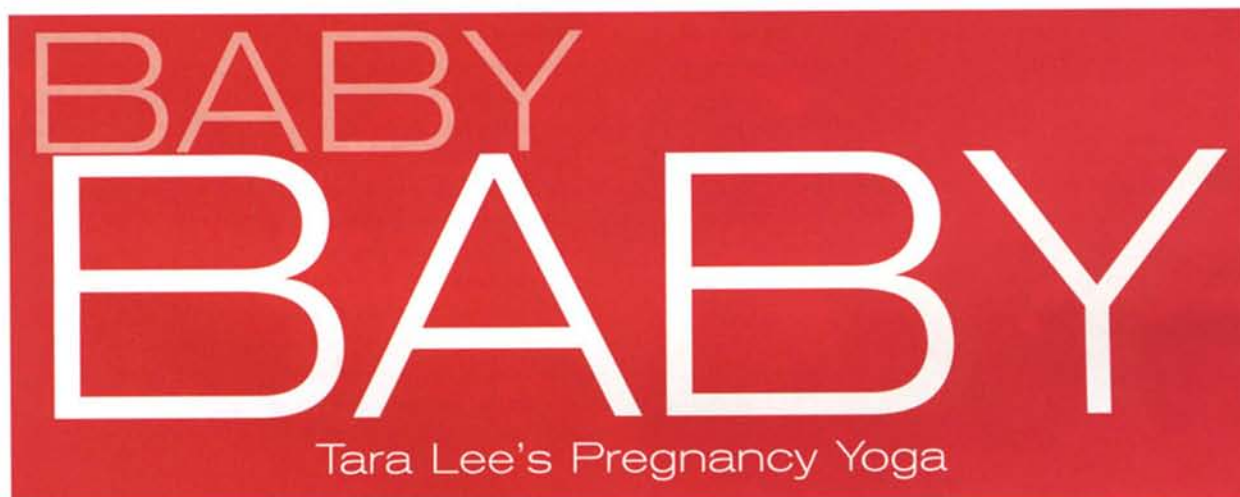
**P**regnancy is a magical experience, a celebration of new life and the miracle of creation. It should also be a time of great vitality and energy. I believe that practising yoga on a regular basis will enhance your pregnancy and birth significantly.

It is the ideal preparation for birth, combining postures that will increase your flexibility and strength in a gentle, non-strenuous way, with techniques that will help you relax and connect with your baby. Yoga's emphasis on bringing balance to the body will also make you feel more energised as well as bring relief from tension and stiffness.

I have found through my own experience of pregnancy and from listening to the mothers who come to my classes, that many of the common pregnancy ailments, such as sciatica, SPD and backache, are kept at bay through regular practice.

Each month in this column I will introduce and explain a posture or breathing technique, and its benefits. These can be done individually to treat a particular condition or built together into a practice. I will also answer questions from readers and give out my top tips for pregnancy which I have collected from my students.

You don't need to have done any yoga before your pregnancy – now is a great time to start...



*Dear Tara*

I would be very grateful for some advice. I have been practising yoga regularly for six years and have just discovered that I am pregnant. I would really like to continue practising yoga safely during my pregnancy and plan to use your DVD for help.

My question is really about what is suitable during the first few months. I realise it depends on the individual and you can't say anything categorically but, as a general rule, is it recommended to stop completely, limit practice to a few stretches, or should it be alright to do a very gentle class?

I'd really appreciate some advice.

Best wishes, Louise

*Hi Louise,*

It is best to take things easy the first 3 months. I would do very gentle yoga stretches and pranayama/breathing techniques until you have had your scan. After 3 months the foetus should be more secure in the womb. Initially you will probably feel very tired and possibly a bit nauseous, so may not feel like doing much anyway. Breathing exercises/pranayama can really help with morning sickness (as can ginger tea!) and are perfectly safe. During your

pregnancy you should avoid strong twists, lying on your belly, any jumping, any compression of the abdomen and make sure you don't get too hot. Eating something light before practising is a good idea, and don't forget to drink lots of water afterwards.

I would avoid classes for the first trimester (most teachers won't allow you to practise until after 12 weeks anyway) and then find a good pregnancy yoga class after your 12-week scan. As you have been practising yoga for 6 years and have an established practice, you could go back to your practice after 12 weeks, modifying it and always being careful to listen to your body, and being careful not to push yourself. You should also widen your legs in forward bends as your bump grows.

My DVD will be helpful during the first trimester if you want to follow the breathing section and visualisation. Once you are over 12 weeks you should be able to do all of the DVD and can choose whether to do the restorative practice (if you are feeling tired) or the full practice. If you go to a general (non-pregnancy) yoga class, try and find a teacher who knows about pregnancy yoga.

Let me know how you get on and try to come to one of my classes if you get a chance!

Best wishes, Tara