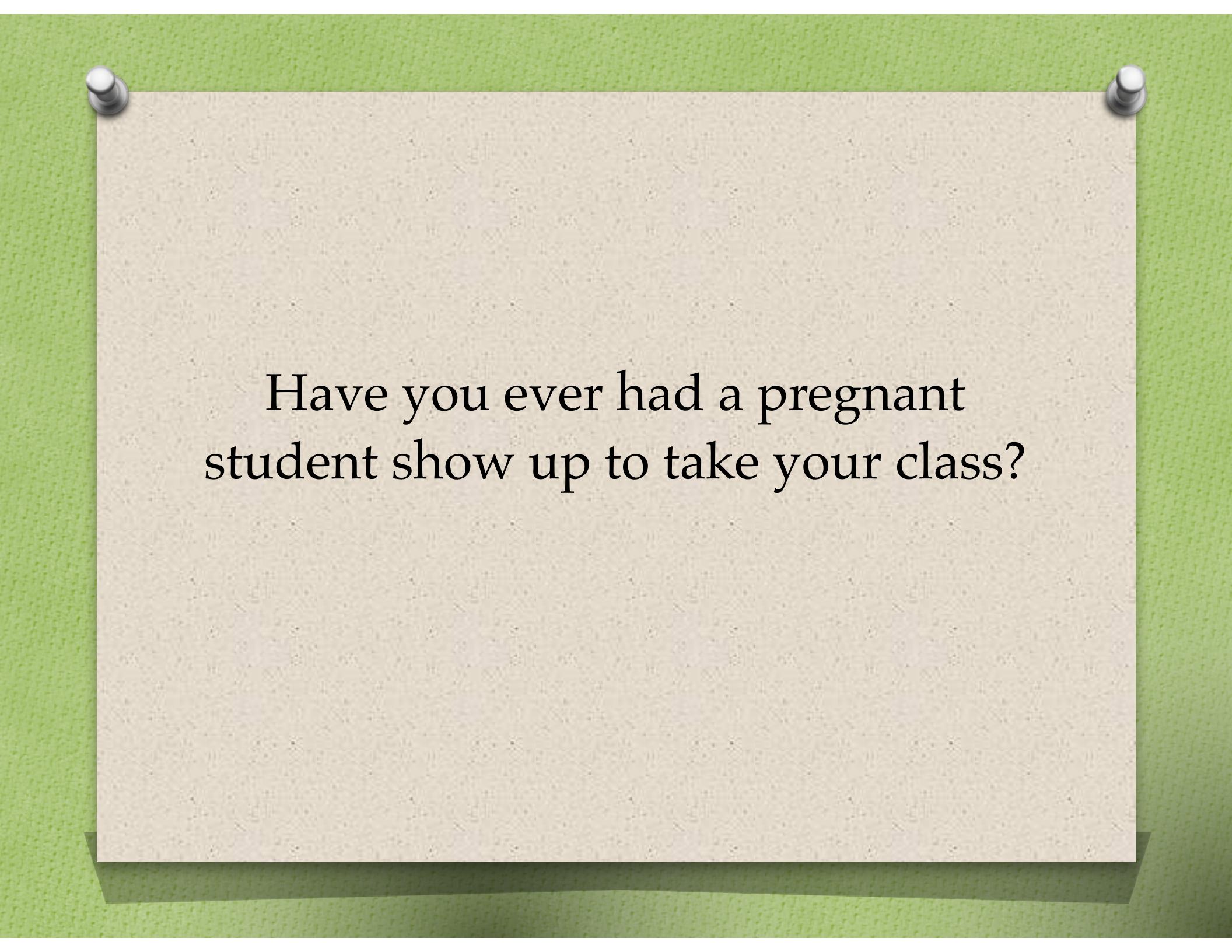




Adapting Yoga for Pregnancy  
With Lily Dwyer Begg of Home Yoga Online Prenatal Yoga  
Teacher Training



Have you ever had a pregnant student show up to take your class?

What moments (poses, transitions, Pranayama) in your sequence were you unsure about modifying for a pregnant student?

Find me:

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Website: [www.lilydwyerbeggyoga.com](http://www.lilydwyerbeggyoga.com)

# Home Yoga Online

# PYTT starts 10/7/23

Use coupon code BOLSTER To save \$100 on PYTT

(Including \$200 early birds rate **through 9/4** for a \$300 savings!)

2 Full BIPOC Scholarships. Apply here: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdcaRjKMPqFXqu2pkrlRYOviWNIjSDRXcUv4cEEeWlbQjp01Q/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdcaRjKMPqFXqu2pkrlRYOviWNIjSDRXcUv4cEEeWlbQjp01Q/viewform?usp=sf_link)

<https://www.lilydwyerbeggyoga.com/yoga-teacher-training/prenatal-teacher-training>

# My Intention

This presentation will cover:

- 1. Trimester-by-Trimester Anatomy and Physiology: Gain a comprehensive understanding of how the pregnant body changes throughout each trimester and learn how to modify yoga sequences accordingly.
- 2. Prenatal Yoga Benefits and Contraindications: Understand the numerous benefits of practicing yoga during pregnancy and identify potential contraindications to ensure the safety and well-being of pregnant students.
- Addressing Pregnancy-Related Discomforts: Explore common discomforts experienced by pregnant individuals, both on and off the yoga mat, and discover techniques to support and alleviate these issues effectively.
- Empowering Pregnant Students: Learn strategies and approaches to create a nurturing and inclusive environment that empowers pregnant students to feel strong, confident, and secure during your yoga classes.

## WORKING OUT DURING PREGNANCY IMPROVES OUTCOMES FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY

What we've found [in the research](#) in the past ten years is that pregnant people who were never active before and also pregnant people who were active prior to pregnancy, should both get AT LEAST 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise PER WEEK and it will benefit the pregnant person's health, the birth outcome, and the health of the baby.

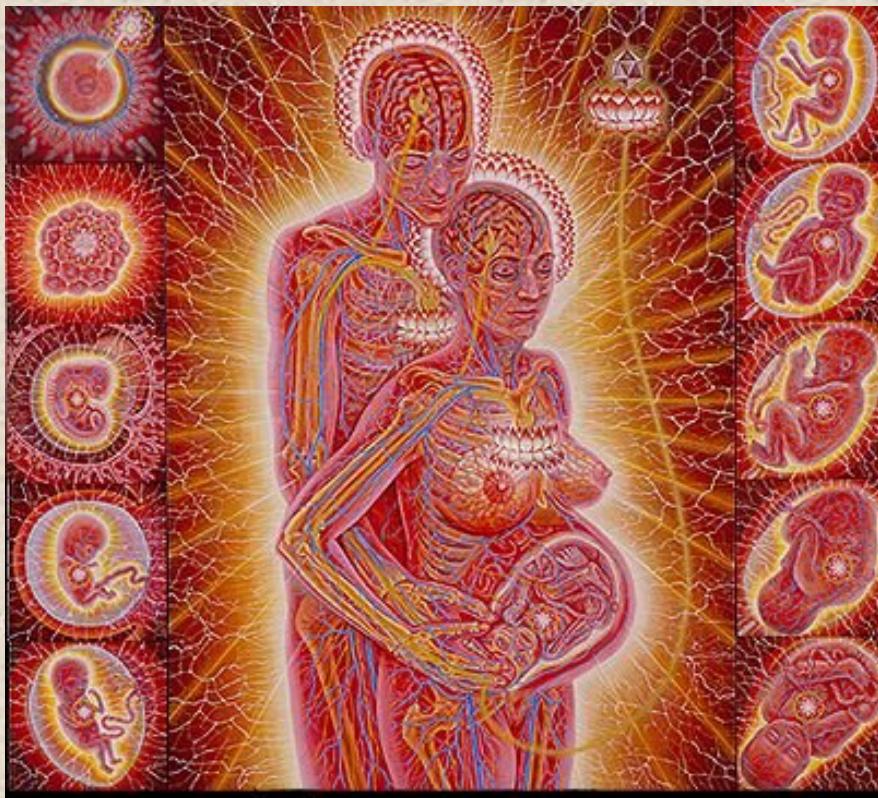
# Why practice yoga during pregnancy?

- Strengthen deep core to help “pushing” and to reduce low back pain
- Strengthen and stabilize muscles around the pelvis
- Lowers risk of gestational diabetes and excessive weight gain
- Reduces c-section risk by 55%
- Can shorten labor duration
- Increases blood flow to pregnant person and baby
- Improves Mood
- Preps physical stamina & nervous system (F-T-P) for the marathon of birth
- Helps support postpartum recovery
- Creates community - and it takes a village! - social support is a pillar of wellness
- Supports optimal fetal positioning

“Women are strong, strong, terribly strong. We don’t know how strong until we are pushing out our babies. We are too often treated like babies having babies when we should be in training, like acolytes, novices to high priestess hood, like serious applicants for the space program.”

– Louise Erdrich, *The Blue Jay’s Dance*

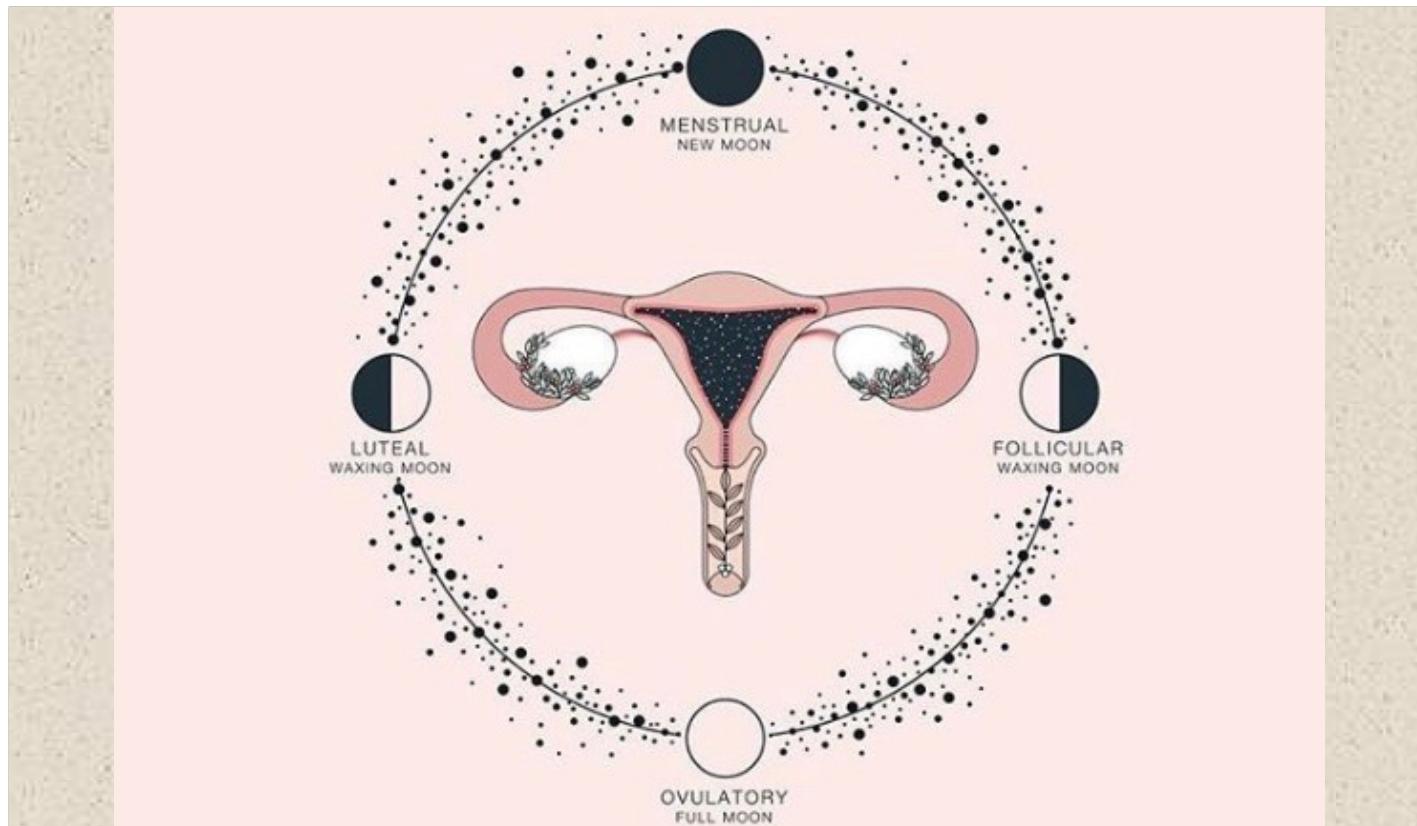
# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy



*Pregnancy* 50" x 56", oil on linen, 1988

[www.alexgrey.com](http://www.alexgrey.com)

# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy



# First Trimester

## Weeks 1-13



# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy

## **First Trimester: Week 1 through Week 13**

- Most fragile stage: most critical for developing fetus: organs and systems of fetus are created
- Nausea, extreme fatigue, hormone changes.
- Relaxin and Progesterone cause digestive organs to slow down, causing constipation, gas and indigestion
- Hormones and increase in body fluids cause need for frequent urination even before fetus is big enough to press on bladder.
- Most of Baby's systems are fully formed at 12 weeks.
- ACE study on hot yoga

# First Trimester Practice Considerations:

1. feet are (inner hip) width apart.
2. no jumping, begin slow-flows and heel toeing feet in and out rather than jerky big steps and jumps
3. head in line with heart on nauseous days
4. gentle chest opening can relieve soreness in breasts
5. avoid intra-abdominal pressure and pelvic floor pressure (deep squats or crunches and boat pose)
6. encourage bridge pose, legs up the wall, supported shoulder stand
7. This can be a deeply internal time for many folks. It is ok to take a break from practice or certain parts of practice and practice compassion and self acceptance .

## **Second Trimester: Weeks 14 through Week 27**



# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy

## **Second Trimester: Week 14 through Week 27**

- “honeymoon” of pregnancy. Increase in energy, decrease in nausea
- Movement is felt as early as 13, usually between 16-20 weeks.
- Blood volume increases by 40% by end of 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester
- Good time to build strength and stamina

# Second Trimester Practice Considerations:

1. encourage strengthening, becoming more active in practice during this “honeymoon” phase
2. feet are outer hips width apart
3. Stop plank pose and “vinyasa” past 20 weeks to preserve integrity of abdominal muscles. (Pregnancy DR/Injury DR)
4. Strengthen thighs and glutes to create pelvic stability
5. begin practicing savasana on left side, avoid lying on back/belly
6. Emphasize initiating forward folds by lengthening the low spine and leading with the breastbone so there is no compression at the abdomen.
7. Step foot outside of the hand from 3 legged Downward Facing Dog and use the hand for transitional support coming into Warrior Poses.

# Weeks 28-40+



# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy

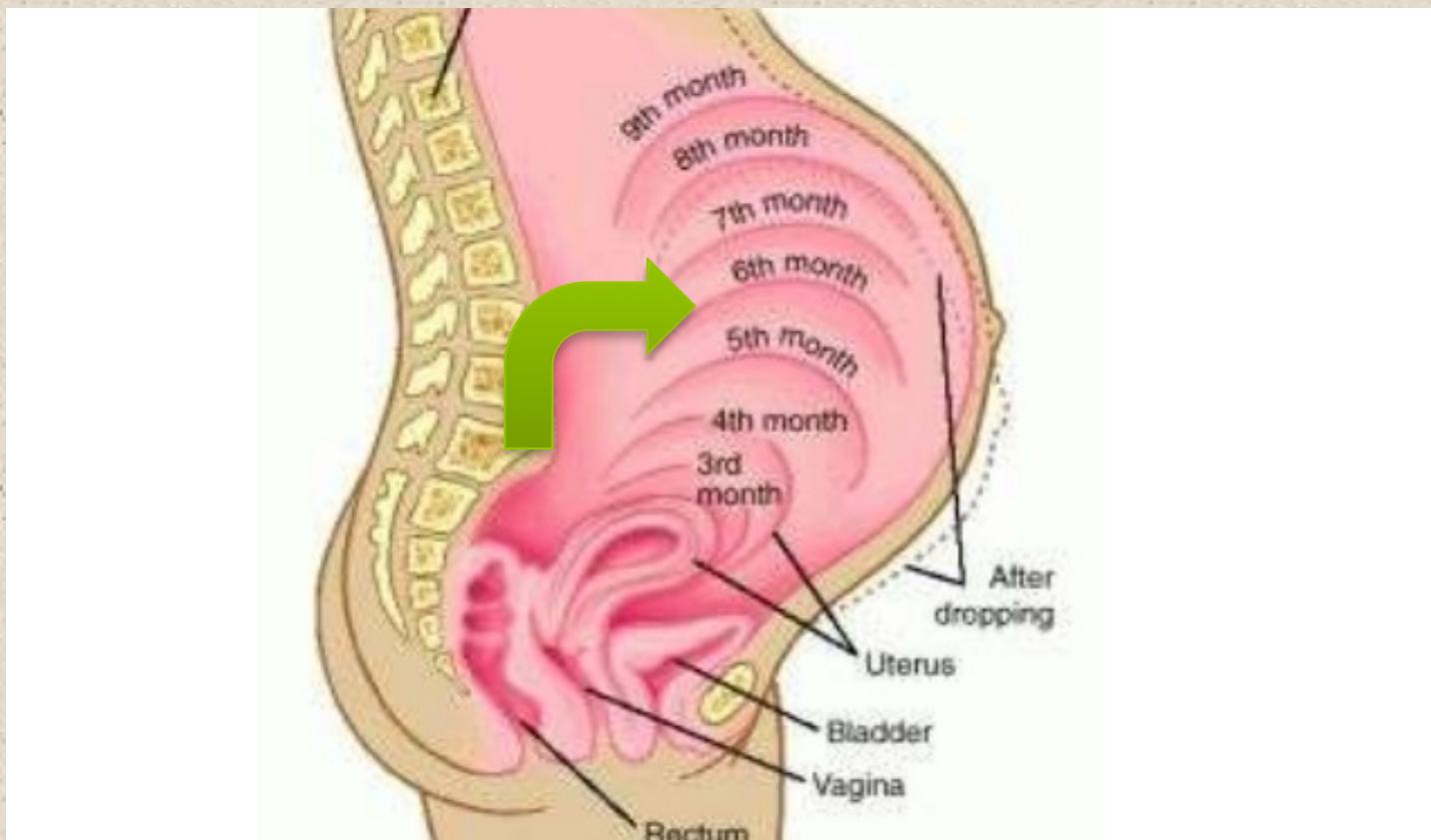
## **Third Trimester: Week 28-40+**

- Hips and pubic bone changing shape, which may contribute to pelvic pain or instability
- Swelling of hands and feet from decreased movement, decreased hydration and increased blood volume
- Braxton Hicks, practice contractions, felt
- Baby “drops” at 38 weeks, creating more breathing room and increased pressure on bladder and pelvic floor, and the “waddle”

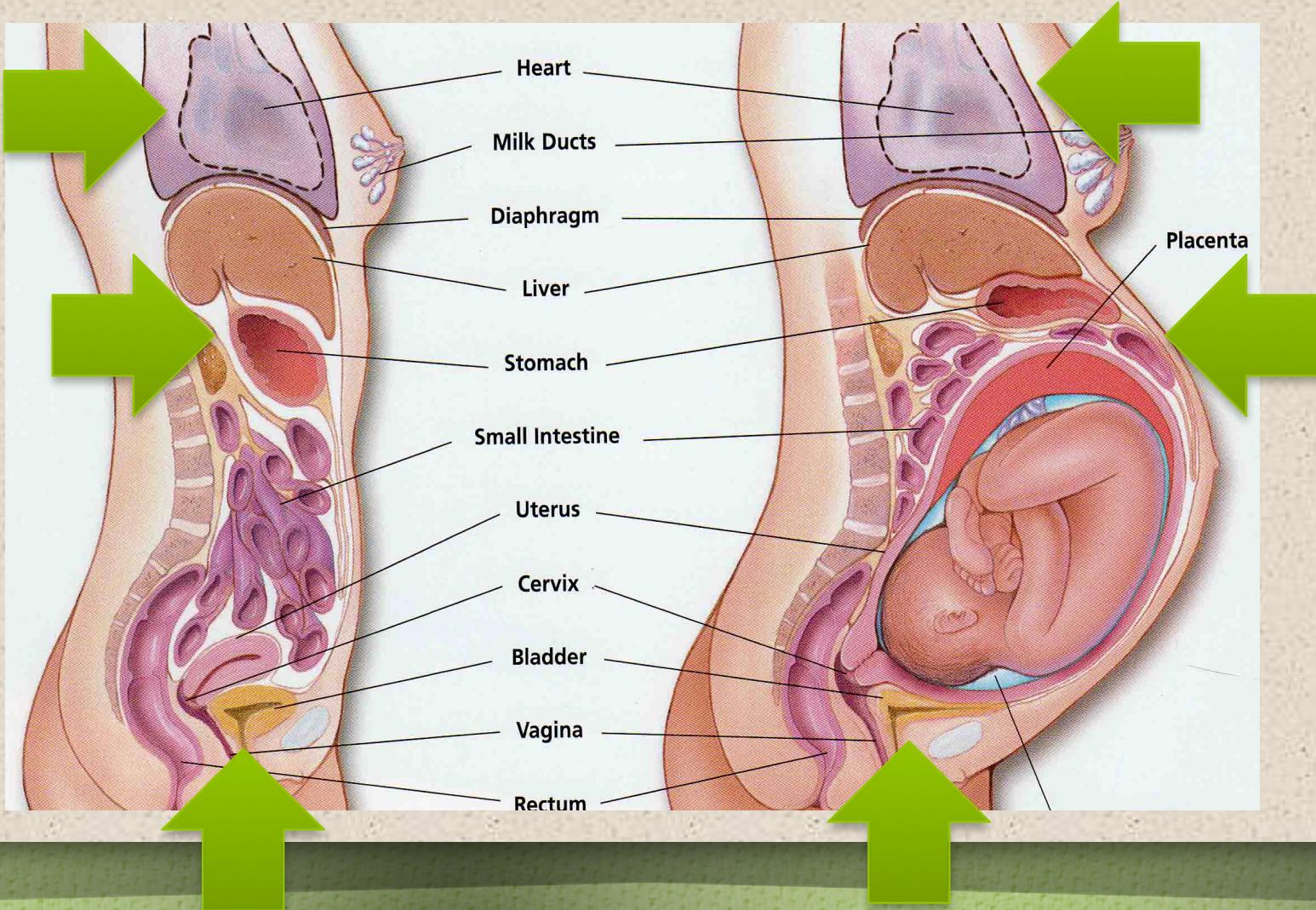
## Third Trimester Alignment Considerations:

1. feet as wide as needed in folds and Sun Salutations
2. Use props to avoid compression of belly in folds
3. Use of the wall/chair/ball can stabilize pelvis
4. Encourage standing postures, squats
5. Head in line with heart for acid reflux
6. squat every day, cat/cow every day!
7. Continually lengthen and avoid bunching up around the bump!
8. Brief inversions for Pelvic Floor heaviness up to 35 weeks.

# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy



# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy



# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy



# “Fourth Trimester” (three months postpartum)



# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy

## **“Fourth Trimester” (three months postpartum)**

- Wait four weeks after vaginal birth, six after caesarian section to return to full yoga exercise and get clearance from doctor or midwife.
- Use caution with “crunches”, abdominal exercises that increase intra-abdominal pressure and pressure downward on pelvic floor, deep twists and backbends.
- Mula Bandha can be performed immediately after giving birth to begin to tone pelvic floor.
- Baby loves skin to skin contact with parents. Baby loves to be sung to. Chanting helps parents to reconnect to breath and helps relieve stress for *all* the family members when baby seems inconsolable.

# “Fourth” Trimester Practice Considerations:

1. Encourage chest and shoulder opening and making space in the chest in all postures
2. Twisting and backbending should be kept to 30-50% of full capacity to give the linea alba and connective tissues in the abdomen time to firm.
3. Avoid deep belly breath in an active vinyasa practice.
4. Uddiyana and Mula Bandha should be applied
5. Pranayama and Relaxation Postures to increase milk supply.



- Pelvic Organs sit lower in pelvis first few weeks after birth. Displaced organs are settling back into place. Avoid high impact to avoid prolapse.
- C-section stitches or perineal stitches from tearing during labor and delivery need time to heal.
- You have a wound the size of a dinner plate from birthing the placenta that needs to heal.

Wrists, elbow, shoulders, spine: you have an 8 lb baby attached to you at all Times.





## Energetic Needs each Trimester

These can be addressed in a private session, a Sankalpa/Intention, or a prenatal yoga class sequence

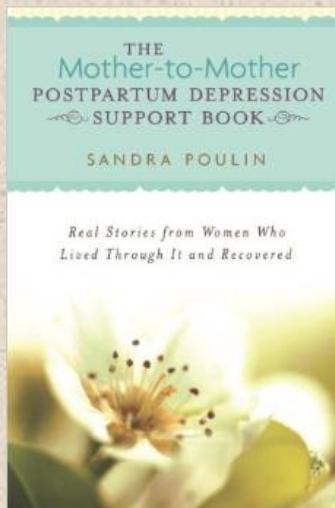
- Menstrual Cycle: Attune to the phases and don't just push through. Listen to your body. Honor the cyclical nature of the natural world that also is woven into the intelligence of your body.
- 1st : go inward, listen, attune | back body/breath/mind
- 2nd : stabilize, integrate, trust | chest/hips/feet/legs
- 3rd : release, soften, allow | jaw/hips/pelvic floor/sounding
- 4th: rest, drop everything., open heart center, reclaim center, draw in, feel it all | deep core/diaphragm/nervous system

# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy

- o Be aware of Postpartum Depression and know when to seek support!

Resources:

<http://www.postpartumprogress.com>



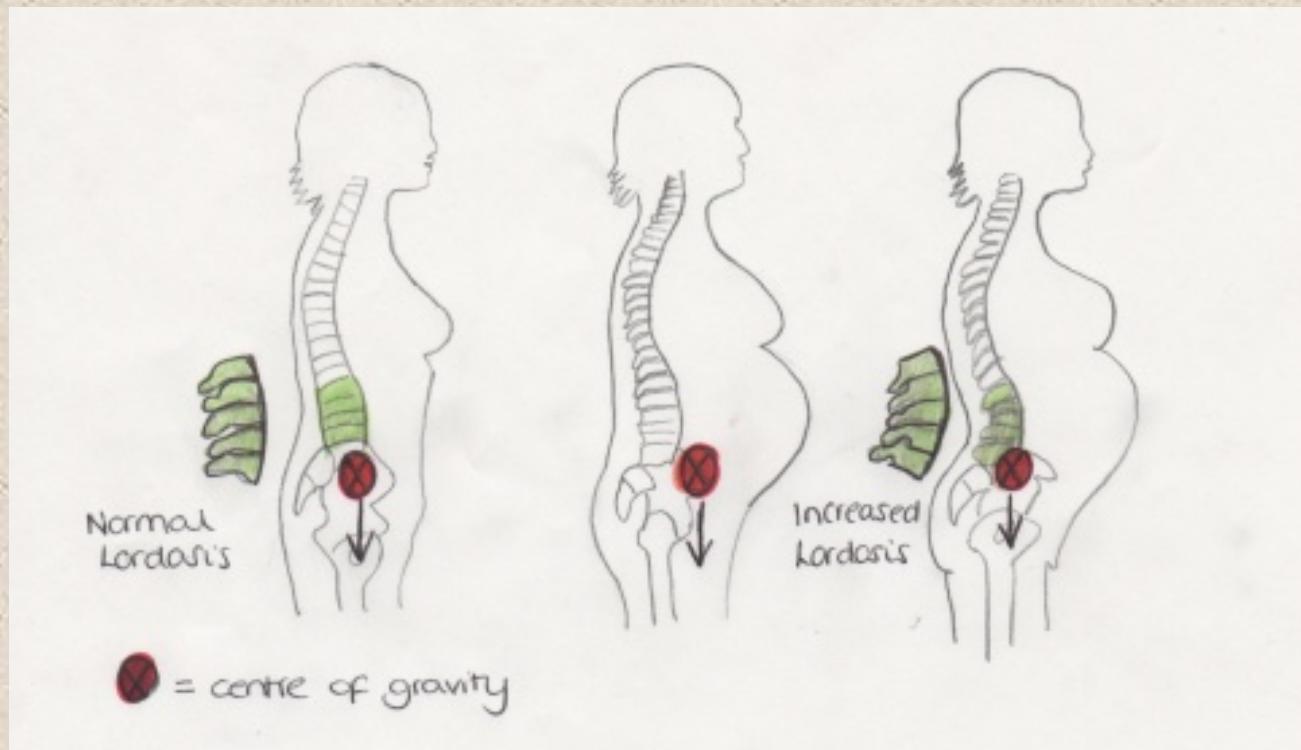


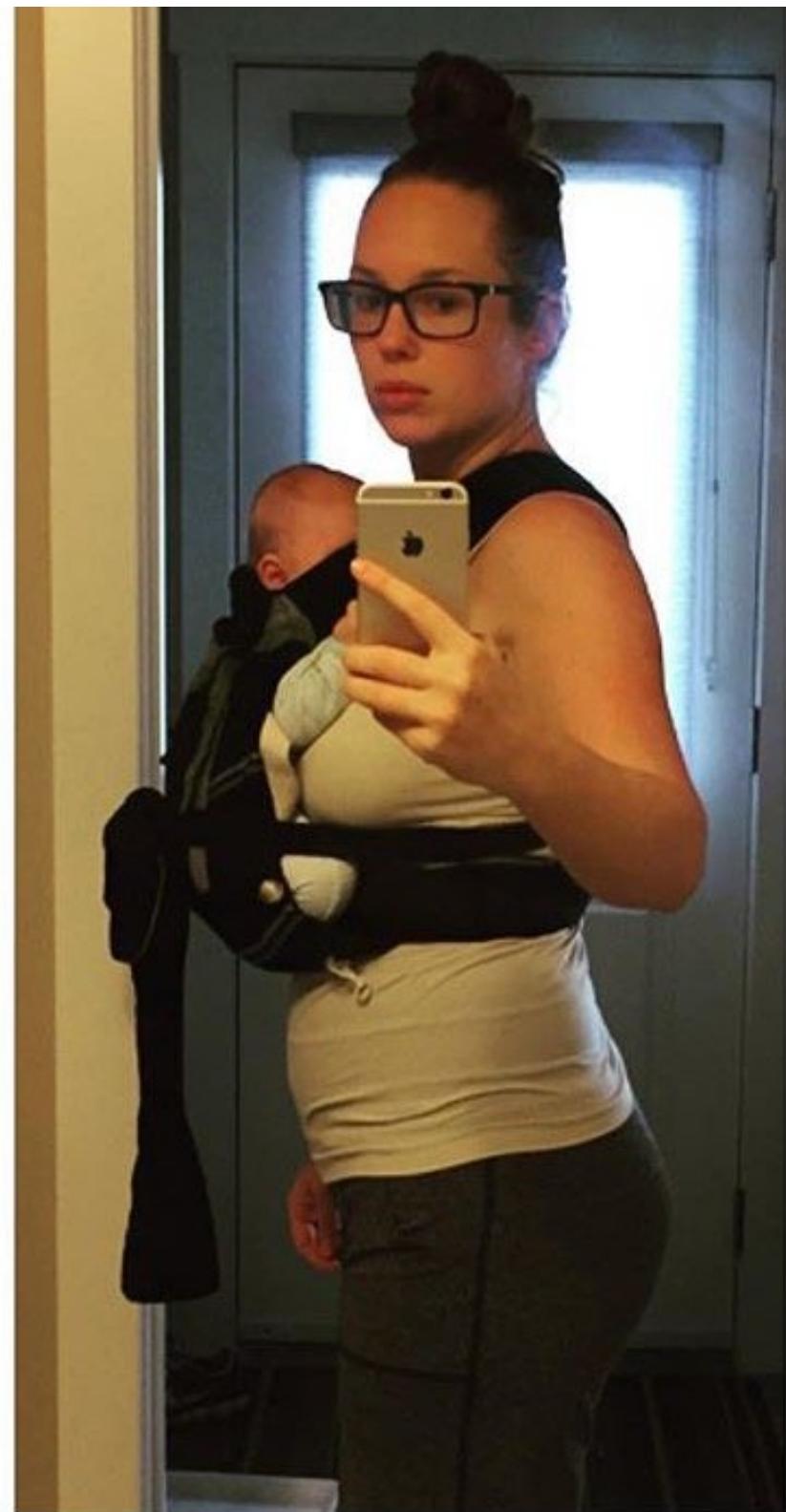
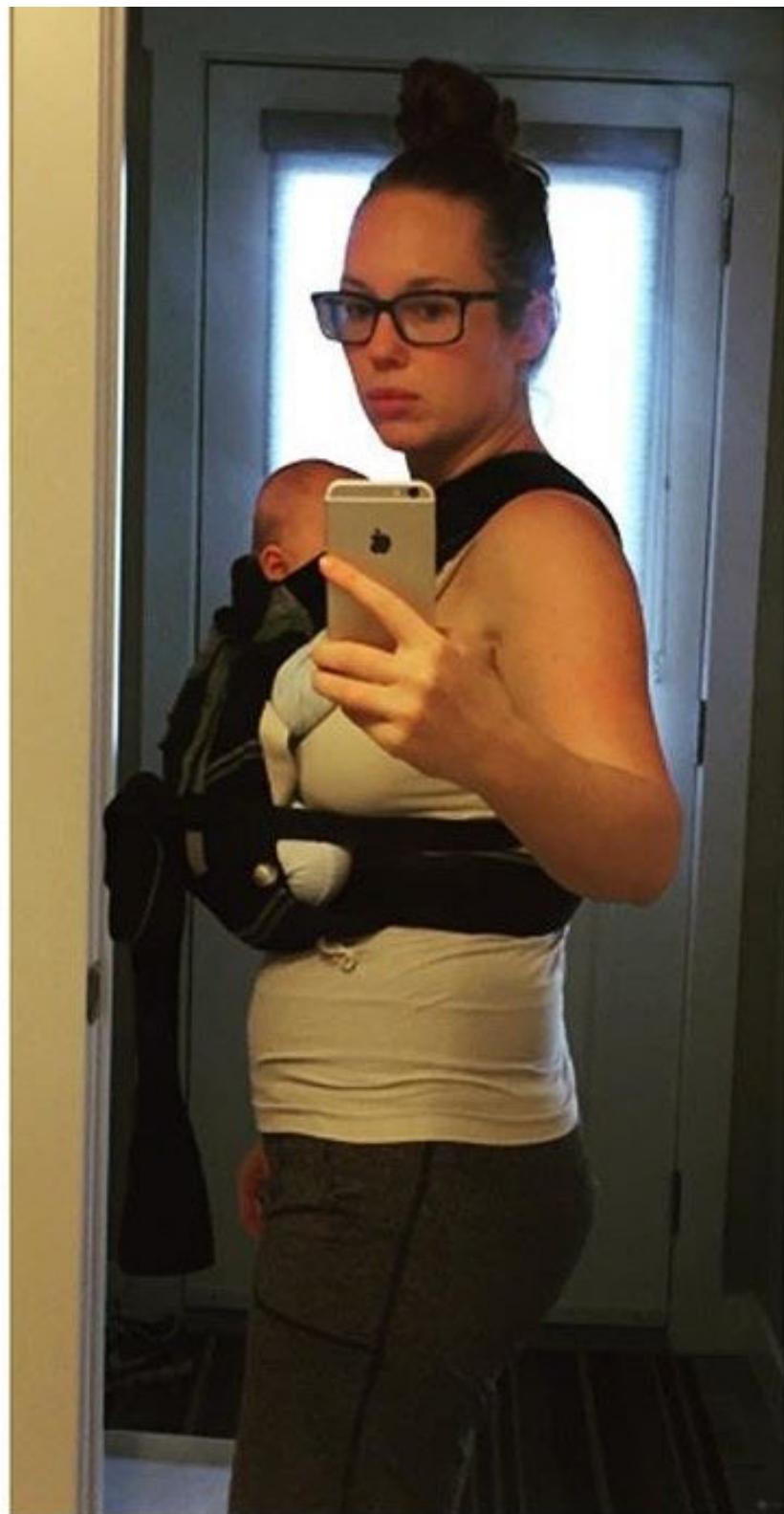
## SCOPE OF PRACTICE

# Scope of Practice RPYT

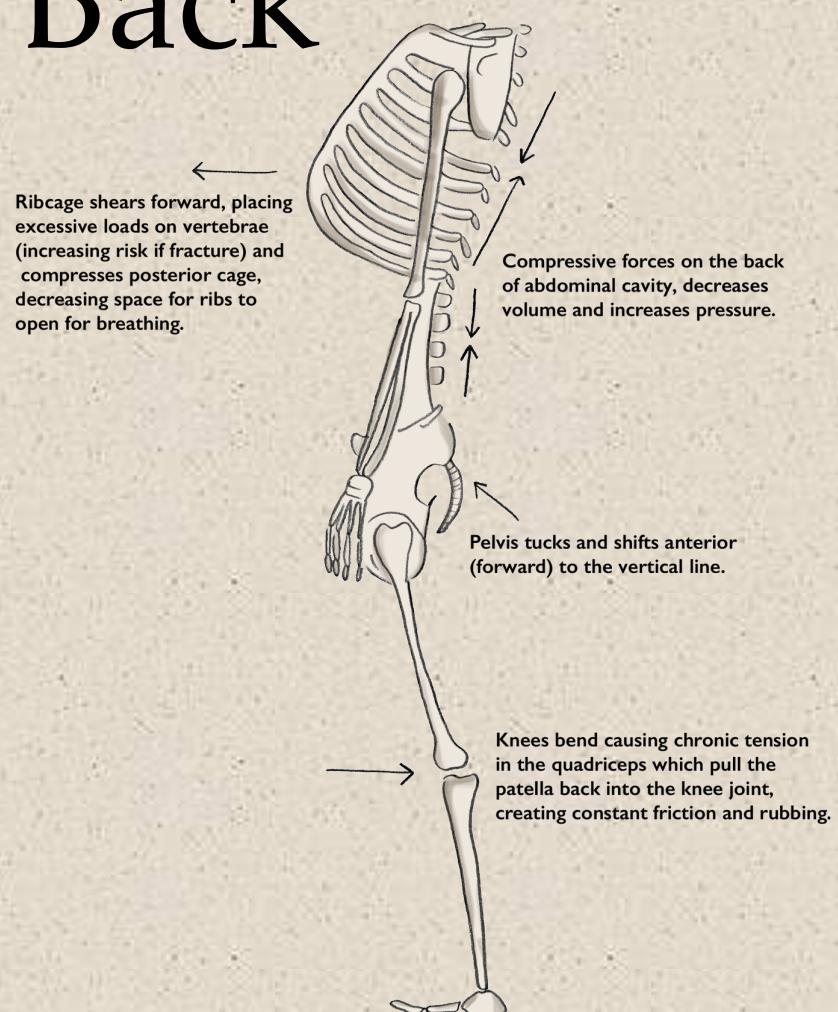
1. Design yoga sequences to meet students needs during pregnancy, birth, postpartum
2. Coach and provide general information to modify postures for specific common pregnancy phases and discomforts
3. Listen to student's concerns and direct a student to seek medical help if necessary
4. Request permission to touch and adjust postures for ease, alignment, and injury prevention
5. Promote yoga for physical and mental wellbeing during pregnancy and parenthood

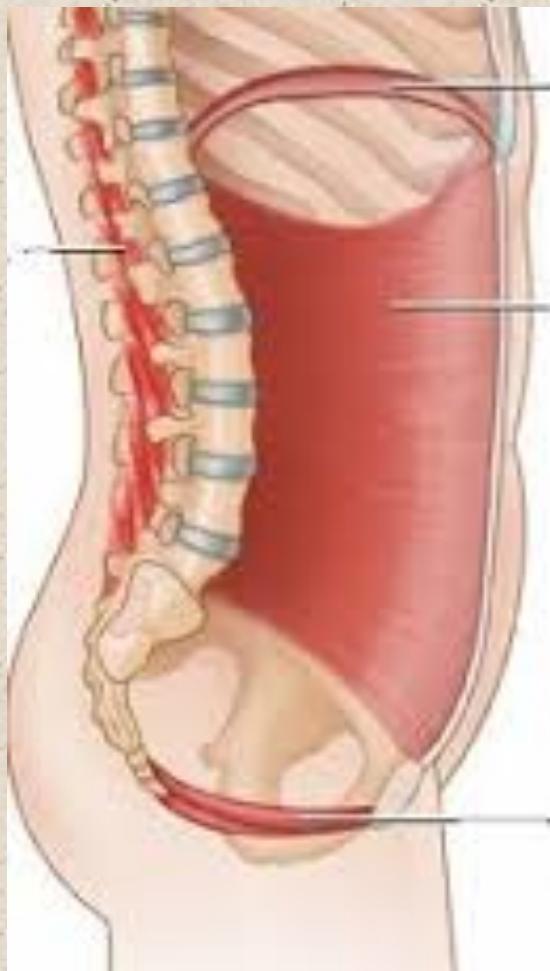
# Lordosis





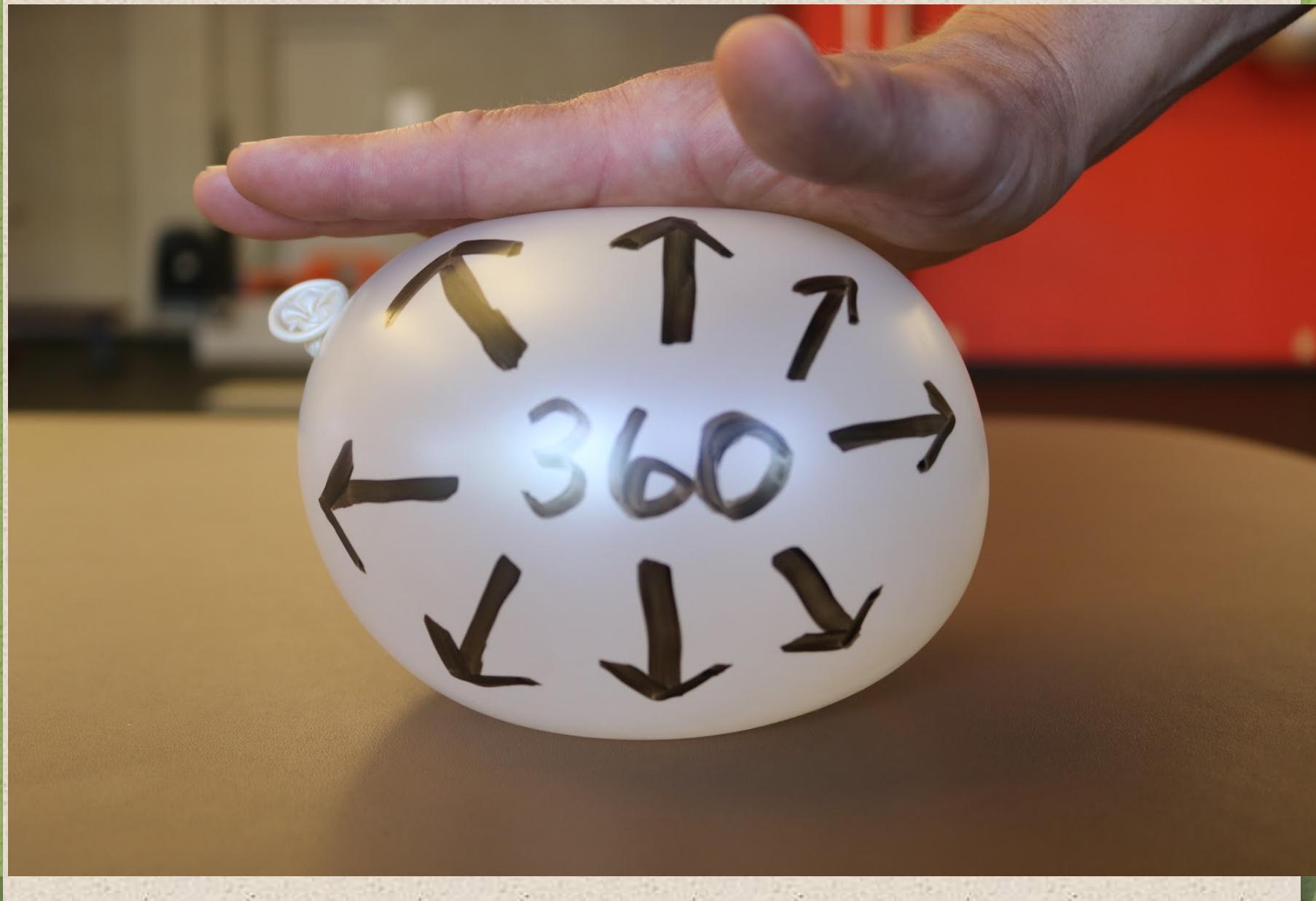
# Sway Back



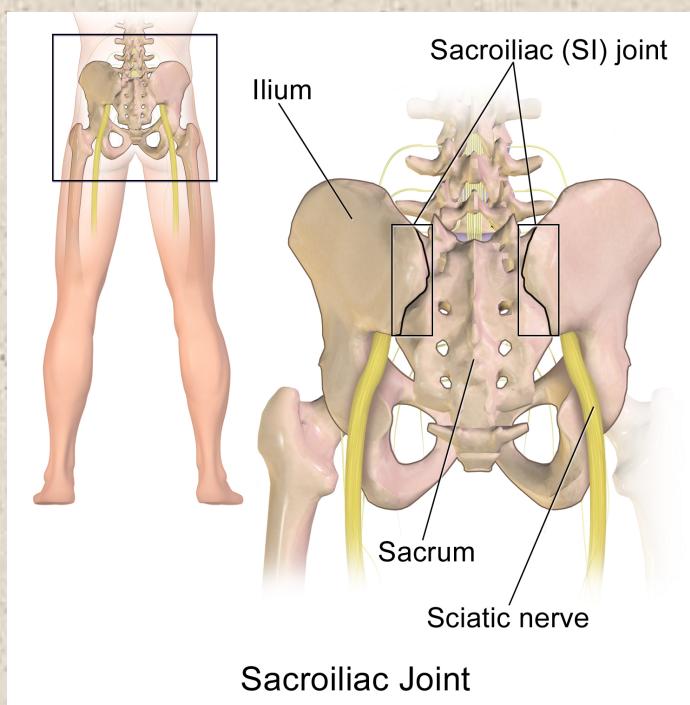


# **Under Pressure!:** **Belly breathers, chest breathers** **Impact on nervous system** **And throat/neck/jaw/pelvis**

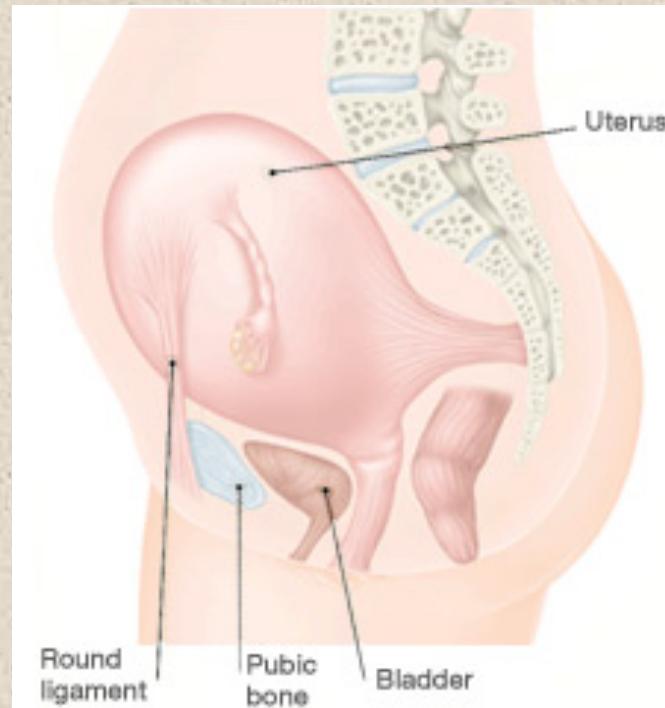
A photograph of a person's torso from the side, wearing a white tank top. A large white circle is drawn on the abdomen, and several black arrows point outwards from the sides of the circle, illustrating the mechanics of belly breathing. The background is blurred, showing an indoor setting with warm lighting.



# Sciatica



# Round Ligament Pain



# Round Ligament Pain

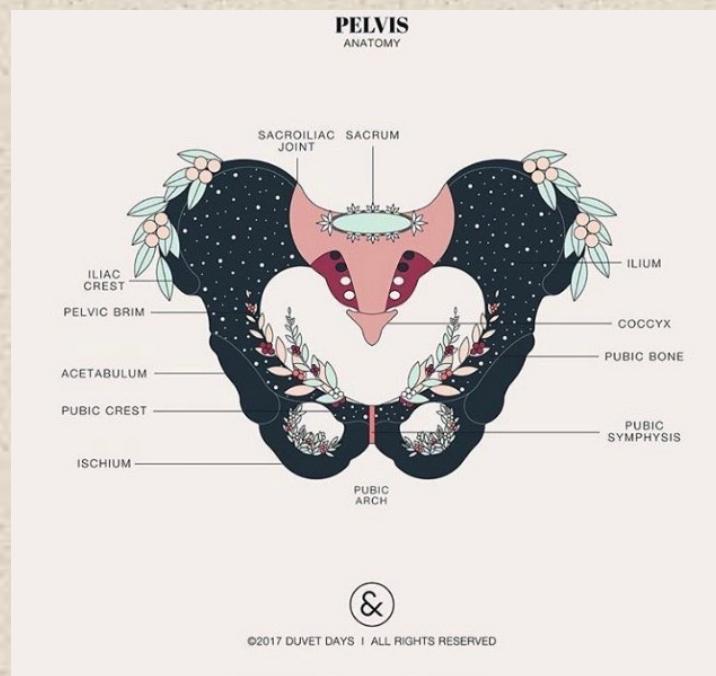


# Relaxin Hormone

- Affects tissues immediately after conception, increases in labor, stays strong in system up to ten months postpartum
- Relaxes connective tissue: ligaments, fascia and symphysis pubis
- Levels higher in some women than others; higher in women with multifetal pregnancies
- Related to postural changes

# Pelvic Girdle Pain

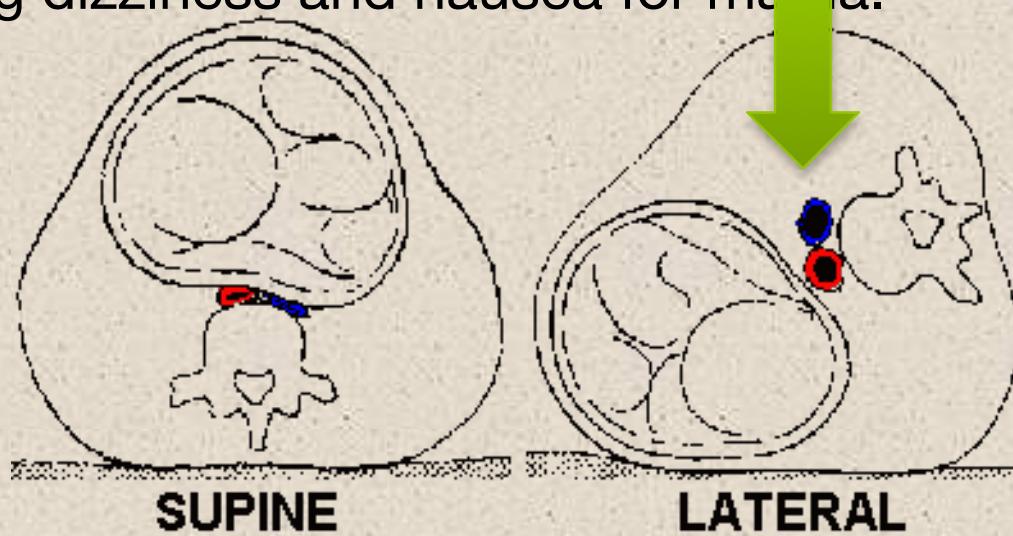
- *symphysis pubis dysfunction or SPD*
- *sacroiliac joint dysfunction*



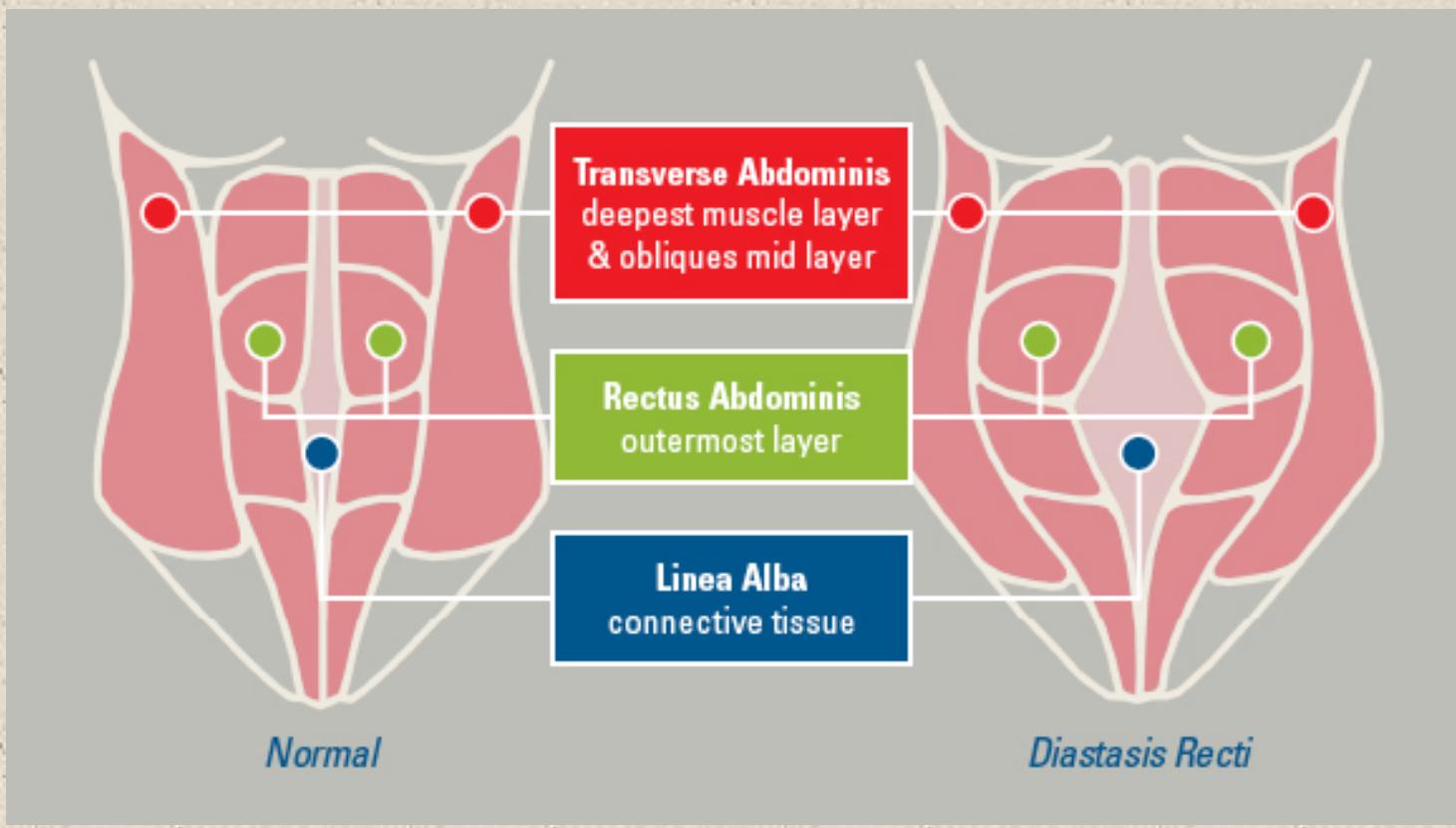
# Vena Cava Syndrome

Vena Cava: Large blood vein that carries blood from lower body to heart. Vena Cava Syndrome appears at around 26-28 weeks, when pregnant students should begin practicing Savasana on the left side. The Vena Cava runs to the right side of the body. When it is pressed upon in supine position, blood to the pregnant person's brain is cut off making them dizzy and putting baby at risk of complications.

The preferred savasana position for pregnant people is on **left side** to prevent vena cava compression. If the vena cava is compressed it will decrease venous return, reduce cardiac output and blood pressure creating dizziness and nausea for mama.



# Diastasis Recti





# Heartburn



# Fatigue



# Headaches



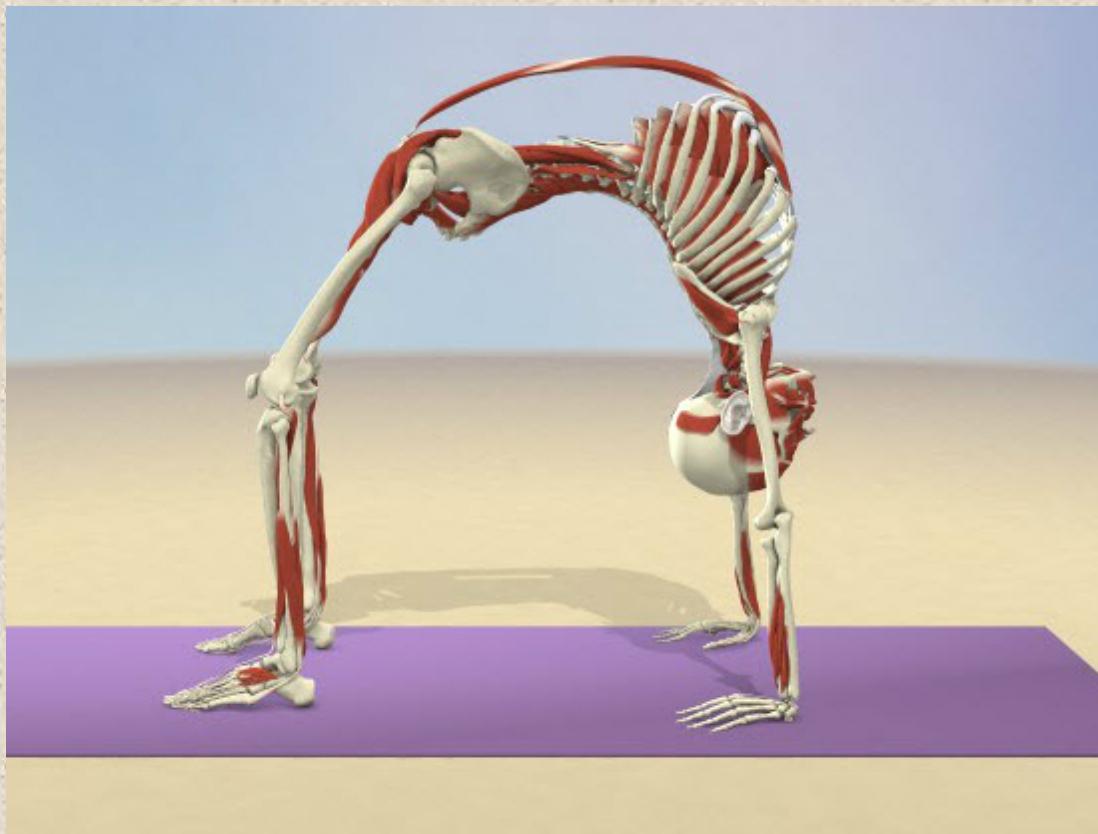
# Nausea



# Anatomy and Physiology of Pregnancy – Quiz!!

- Which trimester is the most delicate or fragile? Which trimester is the “Honeymoon”?
- Why might an advanced yoga practitioner be more likely to suffer from Diastasis Recti?
- Give an example about how 2-3 different systems of the body are affected by pregnancy?

# Postures to Avoid.



# Postures to Avoid.









# Postures to Avoid.











# Postures to Avoid.







# Postures to Avoid.







# Postures to Avoid.





# Postures to Avoid.





# Postures to Avoid.





# Postures to Avoid.





# Postures to Avoid.







# Let's try:

1. Child's Pose
2. DFD —> Warrior 2 —> Twisting Lunge  
—> Vinyasa
3. Locust and Bow Pose
4. Corpse Pose

# How to adapt the practice for an individual



# How to adapt the practice for an individual

Two goals: Keep the flow going for the majority of students (Not Pregnant) in your class. It is not a prenatal class. At the same time, keep the pregnant student safe and skillfully attend to their needs without overwhelming them.

# How to adapt the practice for an individual

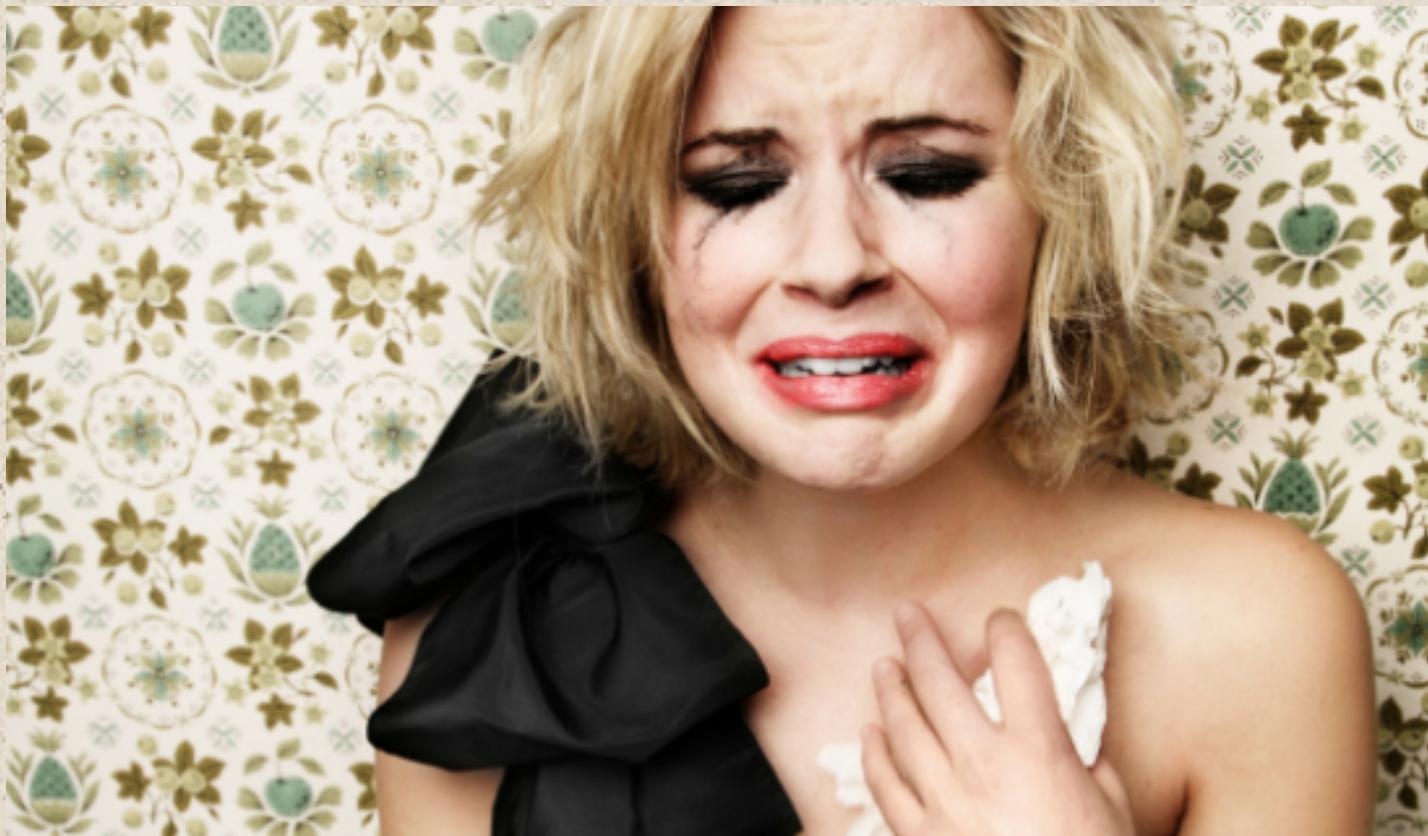
## Steps:

1. Identify and speak to pregnant students before class. Give them some general guidelines so if you cannot make it to them for each pose they should modify, they have an idea of what to do.
2. Think a couple steps ahead so you can be near the pregnant student before *Ex.* a twist or boat pose.
3. Verbally cue. *Ex:* “If you are pregnant you will not twist, you will hold *Utkatsana* 5 more deep breaths”

# General Guideline

- Yoga is a practice of listening to your body and developing trust in your experience. If you are pregnant today, first and foremost, please listen to your body and adapt as needed for your comfort. In general I recommend that you:
- Grab a few extra blocks and bolster to make yourself comfy.
- Modify core work like crunches and boat pose
- Slow down transitions and move at your own pace.
- Avoid deep twists and find ways to rotate that allow space for your bump.
- Avoid deep backbends that excessively stretch your abdomen.
- Don't hold your breath. Practice hugging in around baby with your exhales to strengthen your deep core muscles.
- Modify belly down or flat on your back poses
- Practice Left side lying or Supported Savasana

# How to adapt the practice for an individual



# Still interested?....

- Read:

Ina May Gaskins Guide to Childbirth Ina May Gaskin

The Whole Pregnancy Handbook Joel M. Evans

The Female Pelvis Calais-Germain

Bountiful, Beautiful, Blissful Gurmukh

Hypnobirthing Marie Mongan

Iyengar Yoga for Motherhood Iyengar, Keller, Khattad

- Watch:

*Birth Story*

*Orgasmic Birth*

*The Business of Being Born*

# Above all else remember

- To create a safe and welcoming space: create an experience as much as a sequence
- To admit when you do not know the answer and remember it is out of your scope to give medical advice!
- You are supporting someone through one of the most transformational and significant thresholds in their life. What you offer through your yoga teachings, big or small, has a positive ripple effect in your pregnant students' birth experience or foundation as a parent.

# Above all else remember

Above all else, when we teach yoga – we are really teaching people how to slow down and listen to their bodies, develop self awareness, and trust themselves.

This is vital especially during pregnancy as the body undergoes radical change in a short amount of time.





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<https://www.lilydwyerbeggyoga.com/yoga-teacher-training/prenatal-teacher-training>

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