



LIGHT

How prenatal yoga  
can help you feel healthier,  
lighter and happier

PREGNANCY IS A special time in every woman's life. For most, it is exciting and has the potential to expand a woman's perspective (not just her waistline!). Yet for most women it takes some time to get comfortable with a new body image and find ways to balance the feeling of heaviness in their bodies and their minds. I vividly

# EN YOUR LOAD

recall the most challenging aspect of my own three pregnancies: carrying the load. Think about it. You go from being the only person who inhabits your body to having to share your space with another. And in your belly of all places, which in itself is a pretty personal and vulnerable place.

Over the years of teaching prenatal yoga and childbirth courses I hear a similar cry for help: Women seeking relief from some sort of discomfort. Back pain is the number one side effect of the heavier front load and women often feel bound by this and in search of relief. Some freedom. What happens when our physical body feels heavy is that we just don't feel as light-hearted, carefree and happy. So take a load off, elevate your feet, sit back and read up on the benefits of a prenatal yoga practice.



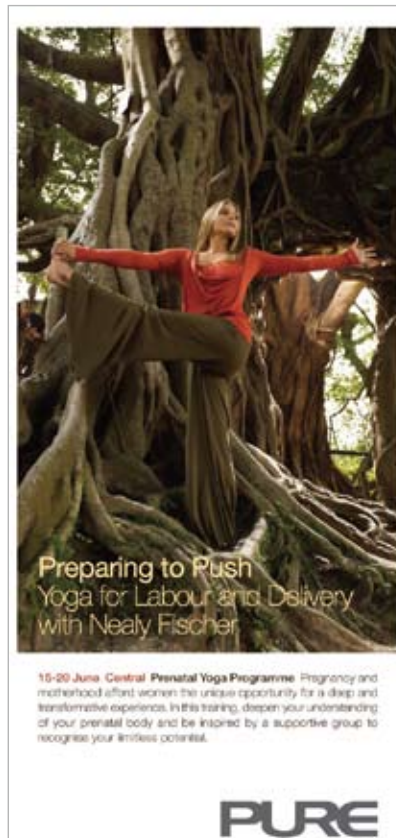
**Release your mind:** There's much to think about and prepare for when you're pregnant. For some women it can be a time of coping with anticipation, fears and all things related to childbirth or motherhood. Practicing yoga gives you the space necessary to let go of your thinking mind and move deeply into you body and your heart. Chill.

**Take a deep breath:** Breathing is something that comes naturally of course, but in Hong Kong many of us are accustomed to shallow and heavy chest breathing (as a result of stress and pollution to name a few). Yoga class reminds you of the natural flow of your breath, which helps to bring about a more balanced state. And when you feel more balanced and at ease you just feel lighter inside. Sigh. Life is good.

**Back pain anyone?** Many women assert that practicing yoga helps them reduce back pain and increase overall comfort in their bodies. The unique system of Anusara yoga, when applied very specifically to pregnancy, offers accessible alignment techniques that have a very therapeutic benefit. In addition, your prenatal yoga teacher can help assess what might be the root cause of your discomfort and serve as a resource for local practitioners in the city who specialize in pregnancy issues.

**Let the endorphins flow:** Yoga can be an aerobic workout. The practice safely elevates your heart rate by getting you to move in a sequential flow of postures. The movements, when accompanied by some hand picked tunes are designed to have you leave class feeling lighter and more vibrant. On the physical plain it's simple, an effective prenatal class should be challenging enough to get you lightly sweating and elevate your mood.

**Eat a balanced and healthy diet:** This one may sound strange but by connecting to your body you may actually decide to opt for a vegetable stir fry instead of a pizza after class. Yoga makes you more conscious of everything in your life including your food choices. You do have to eat a bit more than you usually do while pregnant and there are healthy ways to get in those extra calories. Juices, fruits and vegetables, whole grains and clean protein choices



will help you feel clearer and lighter. Spring is the perfect season to consider your diet and choose to nourish yourself intelligently. Staying healthy makes for a happier pregnancy, a healthier baby and easier labour.

**Strengthen your body:** Labour is like a marathon that requires strength; motherhood is a job that requires endless stamina. By strengthening key areas of your body from the inside out you begin to feel empowered by your potential and better equipped to face any challenge. Go girl, you can do more than you know.

**Stretch to make space:** You may have heard that in pregnancy you are more flexible. However, it's your ligaments that are more lax and your muscles tend to tighten to protect your body from overstretching. Safe and engaged stretching keeps you feeling open and spacious. Not only does stretching feel good and improve your mood, it also helps preparation for a more easeful labour.

**Know you're not alone:** Perhaps the most special part of taking on prenatal yoga is the unique connection that arises when two pregnant women connect. There is a natural relief in knowing that you aren't alone on your journey. Deep sigh, no worries. Many women make lifelong friends (and playdates for their kids!) from friendships formed in pregnancy.

#### Looking to gear up for childbirth?

Nealy leads a unique 5-day program called Preparing to Push, which is designed to give women the tools to dive deep into their bodies and prepare for an optimal labor experience. She works in conjunction with Annerley Midwives to educate and inspire women towards natural birth. When you feel prepared and empowered you begin to dissolve any worry and can fully enjoy all the wonder and fun of being pregnant.

You can email Nealy directly at [nealy@aylagrace.com](mailto:nealy@aylagrace.com). Additional course information for the upcoming June 15-20th event can be found at [www.pure-yoga.com](http://www.pure-yoga.com).