

Health and Diet During Pregnancy

This is a guide for teachers. As yoga teachers it is not our role to give nutrition advice

A main concern for many women is putting on extra weight during pregnancy. This fear of weight gain can often lead to dieting or restricting food intake during pregnancy. When teaching yoga it is important not to comment on the size of your students at all, even if they ask you if they are looking bigger etc. Our role as teachers is to support women through this time and to help them connect with the joy of pregnancy and prepare for birth and motherhood. Focusing on our own bodies and weight gain is also counter productive to our work as pregnancy yoga teachers.

In order to successfully support women during this time and reassure them about the changes in their body, and the necessity of these changes for their child we need to examine our own underlying thoughts, and values regarding our own body image. Given the culture we live in and the unachievable waif like appearance of models in advertising, women are often unhappy with their appearance and their body. If we do not examine closely our own values regarding body image, body size and body shape as yoga teachers it is possible that we may implicitly be judging our students and their appearance during pregnancy.

In terms of Ayurveda, women are suggested to have a *sattvic* diet during pregnancy. A *sattvic* diet is one which is thought to be rich in *prana*. This means eating pure, nutritious foods which meet the needs of mother and baby. An Ayurvedic diet during pregnancy would exclude caffeine, alcohol, drugs, intoxicants, garlic, onions & chilli. These guidelines make a great deal of sense as drugs and alcohol are harmful to the unborn child and it is not recommended that women consume any alcohol during pregnancy. Current research shows that there is no 'safe' level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy, although it is not clear that a small intake is harmful. Similarly smoking cigarettes and taking drugs are not only harmful for the mother, but for her child in utero. While there is no medical need to avoid garlic onion and

chilli, avoiding these and spices in general can help women who suffer from heartburn during pregnancy.

During your teaching of pregnancy yoga classes you will see your students grow and flourish. A healthy woman with a normal pregnancy can gain anywhere between 9 and 20 kilos (or even more – I did!). As long as she is eating healthy, whole foods from all food groups, with an increased intake of calcium, protein and food or vitamins with folic acid all of her dietary needs for her and the baby will be met. Yes she will need to eat more than usual, but not twice as much. Generally during pregnancy women can not eat large meals, so should eat regularly and keep well hydrated. Allow and encourage pregnant women to drink fluids during class and also even to eat, chew gum or drink ginger ale if this is what they need to do to avoid feelings of nausea.

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