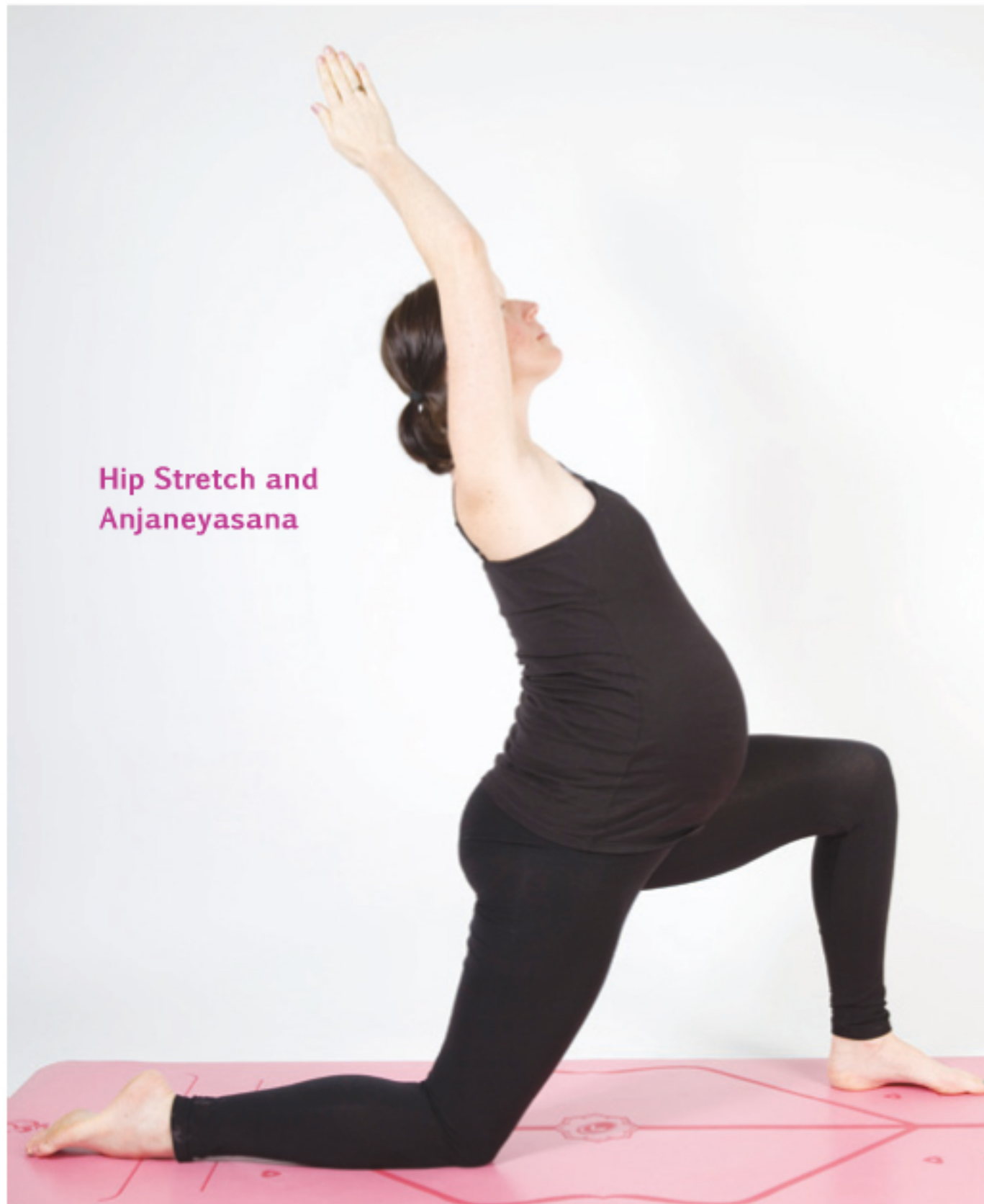


The calm zone

Calm, happy and stress-free: four poses for pregnancy *by Sally Parkes*



Pregnancy is a wonderful and sometimes weird experience. Whilst it is a very calm and happy experience for some women, it can take other mums-to-be through a roller coaster of physical and emotional ups and downs. The asana below are specific to a pregnancy yoga practice and can help with fatigue, anxiety and back and hip ache.

Sukhasana with Anjali Mudra

Sit in *sukhasana* with the hips elevated on a cushion. Move the feet and ankles away from the pelvis a little to create some space in the hips and draw the crown of the head upwards until more space is felt in the spine and rib cage. Move the hand into *anjali mudra* and bring your awareness to the breath. Breathe slowly and deeply before moving in to *ujjayi* breathing. Reflect on how your body feels, how your baby feels, and be in the moment. Reflect on what you are grateful for and remain here for at least two minutes, focusing on the *ujjayi* breath.


Spinal Mobiliser

Now rest your hands on the knees, palms face down. Inhale and draw the chest forwards, lifting the chin from the chest and allow the pelvis to tilt forwards a little. Feel the stretch through the front of the body. Now exhale and move the spine in the opposite direction by tilting the pelvis under, rounding the spine and drawing the chin in towards the chest. Let the arms straighten, still holding the knees and feel the stretch up the spine. Now keep moving the spine forwards and back for at least two minutes. Moving the spine in this way after quiet reflection will help to relieve anxiety, back ache and help lift fatigue.

Hip Stretch and Anjaneyasana

Begin in box position before placing the right foot to the outside of the right hand. Slowly let the hips sink forwards until you feel a stretch in the pelvis and the front of the left thigh. Let the elbows bend a little and relax the shoulders and neck. Inhale and move the hips back for a moment, exhale let the hips move forwards again. Repeat this movement for one minute, moving and breathing slowly. Now let the hips drop forwards and place the hands on the right thigh before stretching the arms up over head. Stretch the arms and spine directly upwards, feeling the stretch through the upper body. Lift the gaze towards the hands and let the hips sink further forwards until the spine is in a slight back bend position, always being mindful of the lower back. Pause for five *ujjayi* breaths. Place the hands back to the ground before repeating on the other side. This stretch will help to relieve hip and back ache and will increase energy levels.

Supported Savasana

This asana allows the mum-to-be to rest with her baby and it is of endless benefit to take your time with *savasana*. Ideally it should be at least 10 minutes at the end of a yoga practice or it can be a yoga practice in itself. Lying in regular corpse pose, however, can stress the lower back as well as compromise the mothers' circulation from around 20 weeks, and so props should be used accordingly. From 20 weeks place some props (a bolster and block work well) underneath the spine and support the head and neck. The legs can be straight or in *baddha konasana*, with the arms resting out to either side. From 30 weeks, lie on your left side to take the weight of the baby off the spine and the vena cava (the vein that carries oxygen back to the heart). Support the right leg with a bolster and the head with a block or cushion for maximum comfort. Breathe deeply and enjoy this special time with your baby. 

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