



Jennifer Huberty, PhD

Yoga And Meditation During Pregnancy

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

yoga, meditation, pregnancy, women, stress, pregnant women, stillbirth, benefits, people, minutes, study, meditate, pregnant, moms, calm, exercise, weeks, research, quiet, gestational

00:00

Welcome to our session on yoga and meditation during pregnancy. I'm Professor James Adams. And with me today is Dr. Jennifer Huberty is an associate professor in the College of Health Solutions at Arizona State University. And she's also an adjunct associate professor at Mayo Clinic. Jennifer, thanks so much for joining us. Sure. Jennifer, can you tell us a little bit about your experience with yoga and meditation for pregnant women?

00:28

Yes, well, I am, you know, I am a professor, associate professor and do a lot of research and complimentary approaches that being yoga and meditation, and I'm also personally involved with both. I have a 200, our registered yoga. And I also practice meditation. So I go to yoga almost daily, and I practice meditation for about 20 minutes every day. So I'm I'm both professionally and personally involved with these approaches.

01:04

That's great. So what do you mean is a train? you're qualified to train other people as well? Is that right?

01:09

Yes, I am to teach a class and yoga or do privates I don't do them. But I like to go and have



someone else tell me what to do. But yes, I can I have a personal practice at home so I could do yoga by myself safely and know exactly what to do. Yes.

01:28

Right. And also wonderful that you're doing research on it. Can you tell us a little bit about the general research in the field and especially about your own research as well?

01:38

Yeah, well, yoga happens to be specifically happens to be an exercise, if you will. So. So Yoga is an exercise but it also has a mindful component to it. We do something within yoga called Wu Ji breathing, and it's a certain way to breathe to quiet your mind is the meditation mindfulness component of yoga. You So, um, yoga is something that pregnant women like to do, because it's very easy on the body, it quiets the mind, you know, those kinds of things. So we, we find that, that women like to do it, and I'm in the business, if you will, of helping women have healthy health behaviors. And so yoga becomes an easy thing for pregnant women to be able to participate in. That being said, meditation becomes super important because some of the benefits that are reported in yoga are really related to that mindfulness component. And the mindfulness can happen in seated positions, laying down whatever that may be, by, you know, meditating. So it's, it's a good use of a woman's time that's pregnant in terms of to improve health outcomes similar to some of what you might see during exercise, but really related to that stress management component that a lot of pregnant women talk about being very stressed during their pregnancy, pregnancy, for whatever reason, that is

03:14

a trait that you have that dual background, both an exercise move, have the other interview about that. And then also your background in yoga specifically and meditation. Can you tell us a little bit about some of the research studies that your group has been involved with?

03:29

Yeah, so um, we recently finished and we're not quite finished with data for this study. But we recently finished a local study here in Phoenix at a yoga studio for pregnant moms to look at yoga as a means to manage gestational weight during pregnancy. And so we're still looking like I said at the data with that, and that will be published when we when we completed but our hopes was that we would see better weight, management Over time, so sometimes women gain too much weight during their pregnancy or not enough weight during their pregnancy. And so we were just looking to see if the amount of yoga that a woman participates in might contribute to seeing a normal gestational weight over time, or, you know, last whatever that is, and we were basing it on their gestational weight when they started the study. So we're looking



at those things right now. And then we also have a study going on in Phoenix and seven prenatal clinics, where women who are considered stressed by self report are going to be using a meditation app. It's called calm. It's a very popular it's in social media pretty much. It's pretty much the top meditation app that exists on the market. And so pregnant women are given access to calm during their pregnancy and then we're looking at their levels of stress. during their pregnancy, and so we're really excited about that study, but we just started recruiting for that study in Phoenix.

05:07

That's great that you're actively doing research on this to be able to move beyond just traditional practice, but help and make improvements in what people are doing.

05:17

Yeah, well, I'll say I'll just add that, you know, in a dream world, we would see that these things are very effective for women and something so simple first position to do is to say, here's a card that has, you know, the way to download this tool, we know that this is effective during pregnancy, here you go, that doesn't take a physician anytime. And then a woman then receives a resource that she can have access to and probably can afford.

05:48

Sure. And that's great. As you say, it's certainly meditation app, I'm guessing is something they could use throughout the day. That it doesn't have to be at any particular time.

05:58

Hmm, exactly. You know, with with yoga, the yoga studies that we do to some of them are online. So I didn't mention that I recently completed a study using online yoga in mothers who had experienced a stillbirth. So, moms who experienced a stillbirth are very likely about 85% of them get pregnant within the first six to 18 months after the stillbirth. So that's a very short time, it's recommended that you wait at least a year under normal, if you will, conditions. And so these moms are super stressed, they're grieving. And so they're not always emotionally mentally ready. And so we were using yoga as a way to help them cope with their feelings, grief for their babies. And again, you know, this is another population where they're not all in one place. There's 27,000 stillbirths a year and so this allows women from all over to access yoga and no matter where they live if they've had this, so once we determine its effect, so we were able to determine that it's feasible that women like it, that it was helping with their coping and their grieving. And we actually have a paper that just two papers that have been published three around the area and one that's in review right now, and another that's coming out. You know, about this study, but ideally, it's the same situation if, you know, God forbid, you know, a woman



has a stillbirth, but it's going to happen. And so a physician who doesn't feel confident about the resources they might have or feel very sad for the family and not know what to do. This is a resource for a mom, and we know these moms, they're saying they like it, and it's safe. So that's another example of, you know, the things that you can do with these consumer products and online products is that they're available to people.

07:57

And that's great that you were able to look at that in the evaluate it and see, especially for the very traumatic case of having a stillbirth. It's, I think one of the most extreme cases that even those cases, people under high stress can still benefit from that meditation. That's wonderful. So can you talk a little bit more about the general benefits of yoga and meditation based on experience and what research has to say?

08:23

Yeah, I mean, I think I think it comes down to really this whole aspect of quieting the mind. And you know, when you can quiet your mind and

08:35

regulate your emotions better.

08:39

Though, those are those are some some huge things when you're pregnant, being being a mom and being pregnant three times, full term pregnancies. It's like, the the, the more likely that you can regulate what's going on, the better. I mean, Pregnancy your first baby is so stressful because you don't know what's going on, you know, you're excited. But then oh my god, Is this normal? Is this normal? Is this normal? You know, that becomes an issue by the second one. It's like, I got this down. But then I've got this other toddler running around and oh my god, I'm going to go crazy. And so and then you just keep adding to the mix. And so there has to be a place where we just get quiet. And so meditation, mindfulness, it's the practice of the present moment. What it's like, do what you're doing. What are you doing right now, being aware of the sounds around you, being aware of the like, how your body is sitting and where you are present right here right now. Not later when I pick up my kid from preschool, not three days ago when my my partner really made me mad, you know, like all these things. You know, it's just focusing right here and right now and this can do wonders. For you, and like I said for for pregnancy though the literature is clear that it manages stress. It reduces depressive symptoms, it reduces anxiety. So, so yeah, it's mentally a smart thing yoga or meditation during pregnancy.

10:19

And those are some really big benefits, reducing stress, reducing anxiety, how frequently and



how often, or how much time is needed to achieve those benefits. Do you think? What would you?

10:32

Yeah, so well, in our online yoga study, and stillbirth moms, we recommended that they do yoga anywhere from 60 to 150 minutes per week. And we are again, still looking at some of the results but 60 minutes was enough to see some change in some of the psychological barriers a week. So we're we're not talking about a lot of time, the hundred and 50 minutes where they were doing it like 30 minutes, at least five days a week was harder for women, they didn't like it as much because it's harder to achieve that, which is understandable. And some of those women were up to 20 weeks pregnant with their child with a subsequent child. So. So we've seen that but we know in the meditation literature that you want to be at about 20 minutes a day. That's kind of where the literature sitting, it ranges from 10 to 75 minutes for benefits. But I think what's very important about this is it's, it's almost like an additive effect. So the longer you do it more often. So, you know, I've been meditating for a few, you know, year a couple years now. So, so it's like, I'm seeing more benefits than I was obviously two years ago and, versus someone who's doing it every day for only 30 days, right that even like I am not a brain person. logical scientists or anything like that, but we do know that there's even changes in the brain. But they do happen when you're doing it more, you know, frequently over time, longer time. So about 20 minutes a day. But the more the longer you've been doing it, the better.

12:18

Am you suggesting doing it? Trying to do it most days a week or every other day? What do you think seems to be my

12:25

meditation you should do every day. And you know, a lot of the apps out there that you can use, like we use calm in our research, 10 minutes a day, daily calm, a new one every day. You just listen to it, it guides you completely and tells you exactly what you're doing. And when you ask the question, am I doing this right? Yes, you're doing it right. The online yoga I would say it's as your body feels, feels. And the good thing with yoga is there's so many different types. There's more aggressive, like vinyasa and power which are more intense. I shouldn't say aggressive but more intense, versus restorative and Yin might be a little bit more restful. So if you're doing if you want to do yoga every day, you could you just wouldn't want to do power and vinyasa yoga every day. Okay?

13:14

Who do you suggest maybe alternating those or it's up to the person. And maybe as the pregnancy progresses, they may shift in which types they're using.



13:22

For sure. And especially with the poses, you know, you got to be careful about some of the poses, just like with exercise, you got to be careful about what you're doing. But the further along you get in pregnancy, you know, you don't want to be on your back. And you don't want to do certain twists. You can't be on your belly, because it's kind of in the way. But there's modifications and if you're if you're at a yoga studio, you should be looking to see that the teacher has experienced teaching pregnant women so that they're able to offer safe modifications for the poses.

13:55

I think that's a very important point. And I think you also mentioned that it's common Nowadays to also find yoga classes that are specifically for pregnant women and adapted for them.

14:06

Yes, yes, there's plenty of prenatal yoga. There's also mommy and me classes. So if you have a little baby and you're pregnant, you can still go to yoga. And there's no excuses, you can still go.

14:19

That's great to turn different opportunities, both for your first pregnancy and later on with children too. So that's a wonderful benefit. And so I'm coming back then to the availability of it. Sounds like certainly you can go to those yoga classes in person, but also, can you say a little bit more about the online class? How would one go about accessing that online class?

14:43

Yeah, so my partnership is with udaya.com. It's udaya.com. And they're an online yoga. It's a consumer base product and you pay a membership. I think it's like, I don't know, let's say \$13 a month. You have access to over 700 Yoga videos in five different languages, different, you know, male and female and easy and difficult and 10 minutes in an hour. I mean, the the libraries is just tremendous. And there's actually, on the first page, if you go to the very bottom, you scroll all the way down to the bottom of their homepage. It'll say ASU, mindful health lab, which is our lab, and there's a women's health program. So if you've never done yoga, you can click on that program and it'll take you through 12 weeks of yoga, from stage zero to 12 weeks, and you just follow it in a row. So it teaches you all the basics and then the classes get a little bit more longer and a little bit more difficult, but nothing hard and all safe. We've had no adverse events in any of our studies, I would say up to 20 weeks pregnancy 20 to 25 weeks pregnancy. Beyond 25 weeks pregnancy, you can still do it. But I, we haven't tested any women in a study beyond 25 weeks, but we know it's safe from zero to about 25 weeks so you can completely



follow along. So if you've never done yoga, it's really great because it teaches you downward dog and mountain pose and all the things that you know, people are like, what is this? How do you do this, and they're just little one to five minute videos. And then as you get better at it gets longer and longer. So you can, you could try something like that. So that's one partner. And then for meditation, there's many apps available. There's some that are free, but my partner is calm calm. And they have sleep stories and sleep meditations and soundscapes and music and calm kids and meditation. They have 30 day courses, they have it for anxiety and stress and you name it They have it. And so if you get the daily calm every day is a brand new meditation. And they're never longer than 10 minutes. So you just open your app and turn on the meditation, you can set reminders. It's, it's an amazing. It's an amazing resource.

17:16

Well, that's great. That sounds like a very useful thing to do. Is it something they can also do if they're driving or taking the bus or train to work?

17:25

Yeah, so driving, you don't want to meditate while you're driving, although there soundscapes and music on calm so you could download them to your phone and listen them in your car. But definitely something you can do. As long as you download them to your phone, on a cell, you know, on a subway or a bus. What a good way to like quiet your mind and reduce stress on your way home or on your way to work. Brilliant idea, actually.

17:50

Yeah. And then it's not taking time out of your day. You're there anyways. might as well try to make it as enjoyable as you can. Exactly. Now, do you think that in some cases It's also beneficial to do these with a partner.

18:04

Um, yeah, I mean, social support, right of any kind is beneficial to any health behavior. So if you can enlist another woman to come over and do yoga with you great out of your living room, how enjoyable is that you can even do it in your pajamas, nobody would see you. And, and then for meditation, it's always nice to meditate with somebody else, just share the energy in the space with someone else. So sure if you can, if you can make that happen, I would definitely recommend it.

18:32

That's right. I think again, it's great to see that exercise and important and in yoga and meditation can be very helpful part a complement to that. And again, just to summarize, I think you're saying that your recommendation is about 20 minutes a day of yoga, that can help and



maybe 10 minutes a day of meditation. You suggesting those in addition to one another? Or would you put them back to back or have one One thing,

19:01

what I say always in these cases is anything is better than nothing. And so I would say if you like to meditate, then do more than meditation. If you like to do yoga, then do more do it because both are going to be beneficial. You don't have to do both. What you might find is one, if you start with yoga, you might grow in your yoga practice and desire to do more meditation. That's what happens happened with me and in yoga philosophy. They say that most people come because because yoga isn't. The physical poses are is called Asana. Yoga is there's like eight limbs to yoga. One of them is meditation. One of them is Asana, and which is the physical poses. And most people enter this yoga through Asana, and once they get Asana down, then they they they search through the other limbs. So things like how you live your life, and then of course, meditation. And so people might find that they want to meditate after they've started doing yoga just because it like I said in philosophy That's what it kind of naturally progresses to. But again, if you're 36 weeks pregnant, and you're stressed out, and yoga is not something you can imagine doing, then meditate, like, you just have to pick whatever is going to work for you. I say do it.

20:16

That's great. And do you want to summarize also, again, some of the major benefits that people would get from either meditation or from yoga? Yeah, like the benefits are similar, but somewhat different.

20:30

Yeah, I would say the major difference is the physical so like, you're going to see more physical benefits from yoga in terms of maybe being more flexible or stronger or something like that. But overall, both of them have mental health impacts anxiety, depression. Well in our our studies, even grief coping, stress management, so it's very emotional, emotional regulation, regulating your emotions, those Mental psychosocial types of outcomes are all going to improving in either.

21:05

looks great, thank you very much. Are there any additional comments you'd like to make or any other resources you'd like to mention?

21:12

No, no, that's, that's it.



21:15

Great. Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time and your advice and you're doing research to help women improve on their health during pregnancy.

21:23

Yes. Thank you.

