



Month 3: YOGA Infant Activities

Top 5 Reasons Why Babies are Natural Yogis (Yoga Students)

Taken from Itsy Bitsy Yoga – Helen Garabedian

1. Babies prefer to breathe through their nose
2. Babies are only concerned with the present moment
3. Babies love unconditionally
4. Babies practice nonviolence
5. Babies practice yoga postures naturally as part of development

Before Getting Started...

Space – Set up your space to include things that induce relaxation for you – natural or soft lighting, soft music, clear away clutter and distractions, and place a padded blanket, rug or yoga mat on the floor. You may also wish to have a pillow or two for position, a small toy or rattle to help guide your baby's head in turning toward a particular direction, and a full length mirror is ideal so that you can see your baby's reaction when he is facing outward.

Belly Breathing – Sit comfortably with a tall, erect spine and place your baby close to you (she can lay across your lap or on her back with her legs near yours). Shrug your shoulders up and then roll them down and back, inviting your chest to open. Place your hands on your thighs with palms up. Bring your elbows in close to your sides and shoulders down. Breathe in and out through your nose, long, deep, and slow. As you inhale, fill your tummy like a balloon. Continue inhaling until you have completely expanded your chest as well. Now, sip in even more air and feel those lungs stretch. Pause and hold it. Gradually increase the time you hold the inhale from a few seconds up to a minute. Exhale completely. Empty your breath by contracting your hips, then your abdominal region and finally your diaphragm. Do this 3-10 times before each yoga practice.

Dressing – Dress comfortably, avoiding any clothing that restricts movement for you or your baby. If the room temperature allows practice yoga with your baby in a diaper only.

Set Your Intention – Create a positive intention before practicing yoga and repeat this intention to yourself.

Honour your baby's wishes – Yoga is not something you do to your baby – it is something she does with you. Therefore request permission before beginning.

Baby Yoga Poses (www.pampers.co.uk)

Baby Yoga helps with neural development, motor skills, balance and more. Here are some things to remember when doing yoga with your baby:

1. Make sure you always work at your baby's pace and stage of development.
2. Maintain eye contact and talk your baby through what you're doing – it will help the bond between you.
3. Wait to start baby yoga until your baby is 4 months old and has good head control.
4. Remember, baby yoga is meant to be fun for you and your baby. If your baby doesn't seem to be in the mood – don't worry – simply try again another day.

Hippo at the Water Hole

A 3-part movement that's an excellent way to massage baby's tummy, helping with digestion and wind. It also helps with spinal mobility and balance.

- a) Kneel on the floor with your baby lying on her back, facing you.
- b) Hold her calves and gently bend the knees towards the tummy.
- c) Hold for a few seconds before releasing. Repeat this 3-4 times.
- d) With the legs still bent, rotate the knees in a clockwise direction, so the thighs massage the tummy. This will help strengthen your baby's digestive system.
- e) Finally, keeping the knees bent, gently roll your baby from side to side a few times. Then bring your baby back to centre.



Rolling Cub

This movement will encourage your baby's sense of coordination and balance. It can also help strengthen the spine and legs.

- a) Sit on the floor, with your baby between your legs facing outwards into the room.
- b) Take both of your baby's hands and gently roll them around each other. Bring the baby's arms in for a cuddle.
- c) Then roll again and take the arms out.



- d) Roll again and take the arms down – your baby will naturally lean towards the floor.



- e) Finish by taking the arms up, allowing your baby to stand if they are ready and in the mood to. Remember always go at your baby's pace and stage of development.



- f) You can also do this exercise with the legs. And to exercise the brain a bit more, you can repeat these movements, rolling in the opposite direction.

Tiger in a Tree

A 'miracle move' to help settle a baby. It can soothe wind and colic, gives your baby a new perspective on the world, and even protects your back.

- a) Kneel with your baby on your lap, facing out.
- b) Put one arm across the chest, and the other arm through the legs.
- c) Now bring one knee up, then stand.



- d) Once you're standing, gently tilt your baby forward, so her belly and chest are resting across your lower arms. Make sure both her arms are hanging over yours.



- e) You can gently swing your baby back and forth for a little bit of fun. Make sure your arms and shoulders are relaxed. Change sides to prevent straining your shoulders.



Airplane Baby



1. Lie on your back with your baby lying on her tummy on your shins.
2. Ensure the baby is secure on your legs. Hold the baby's hands, if you need to provide additional support hold the baby around her chest.
3. Lift your legs up and down giving the baby a ride.
4. A song to sing while playing:

*Zoom, zoom, zoom
We're going to the moon
Zoom, zoom, zoom
We're going to the moon
If you'd like to take a trip
Climb aboard my rocket ship
Zoom, zoom, zoom
We're going to the moon
5,4,3,2,1...Blast off!*

Try some of the progressions listed below once your baby is strong enough and needs more challenging exercises:

- a) *Place the baby on his tummy on your legs, holding on to your hands, but have his chest forward and not resting on your legs.*
- b) *Place baby on his tummy facing your feet. He holds onto your ankles and you hold his knees/ankles.*
- c) *The most challenging exercise is to have baby balance his hands on your knees. You hold his knees (he's facing away from you) and you move the baby up and*

down. This exercise only has two points of contact the baby's hands on your knees and your hands on his knees, which makes it very challenging. Only progress to this exercise when the baby is strong.

Curl-Up

1. Place your baby on her back, legs slightly apart with knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
2. Sit in front of her and let her grasp your index and middle fingers. Close your fingers over her hands.
3. Make sure your grasp is firm and then raise your baby into sitting. Continue to bend her body forward slightly into sitting and lower her into lying.
4. As she gets stronger allow her to do more of the work to crunch up into sitting.

Front Lean

1. Hold your child against you facing a mirror. Place one hand on her knees and the other on her hips.
2. Let your child lean forward with straight back toward the mirror, keeping balance and control, but not touching the mirror. The mirror allows you to check your hand support and watch how your child reacts. Play with herby talking, imitating facial expressions, etc.
3. Vary where you stand, turn slight so your child has to lean forward and to the side in order to see her reflection in the mirror. Don't forget to do this on both sides.

References:

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SPARC: Sports and Recreation New Zealand (2008). Balance: swinging, spinning and rocking. Active Movement.

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Jungle Yoga www.pampers.co.uk