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Yoga class can help expectant moms

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March 6, 2007

By **DARLENE COHN** Post-Tribune

VALPARAISO -- Asana Yoga Center has added a prenatal yoga class to its spring roster.

Just two students attended the first session, but instructor Heather Crews was undaunted.

"Sometimes, it takes a while for word to get out," she said.

Crews is in the first trimester of her pregnancy. She believes yoga is especially beneficial for expectant mothers.

"(Yoga) helps you in labor. It helps you be patient because you're used to holding your poses," she said. "It helps with your breathing, and it helps with your state of mind."

Dana Darr, owner of the yoga center, said women up to nine months pregnant could safely take a yoga class.

Student Liz Bendicsen is eight months pregnant and has taken yoga classes for three years.

"You always feel like you walk straighter when you leave," she said.

Bendicsen has continued to practice yoga during her pregnancy by attending regular yoga classes and adjusting the poses to accommodate her growing belly and changing center of gravity.

"A lot of the poses we do in the prenatal class focus on opening and stretching the pelvis and groin area," Crews said.

Poses are not held as long as they are in ordinary yoga practice, nor do they put pressure on the growing baby. Crews also uses props, such as wooden yoga blocks, stacks of blankets and canvas straps to help mothers gently get into and hold poses.

Throughout the first class, Crews offered advice about using yoga techniques to improve pregnancy complaints, such as sleeplessness.

While the students held their poses, Crews examined their postures to ensure they were correct. She discussed how several of the poses would be different for a woman in the early stages of pregnancy versus those late in their terms.

She coaxed the students into a pose resting their backs on a bolster pillow. "It's the last trimester; you're exhausted; you're probably not sleeping well. This pose is good for helping you fall asleep," Crews said.

IF YOU GO

Asana Yoga Center is at 161 W. Lincolnway, Suite 203, Valparaiso. For more information, call Dana Darr at 309-7860.

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