

Optimising Maternal Health in Third Trimester Pregnancy: Evidence Based Benefits of Pranayama

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ABSTRACT

Third trimester of pregnancy presents with exclusive psychological, physiological challenges, comprising heightened stress, discomfort, increased physical discomfort and preparation of labour. Pranayama being a primordial practice of controlled breathing offers a non-invasive and evidence based method to enrich health by improving oxygen supply, enhancing relaxation, and reducing stress contributing to overall well-being. Pranayam is thought to regulate autonomic nervous system, promoting relaxation, reducing stress levels and also increases O₂ delivery. This review aims to find out the role of different pranayams specifically in third pregnancy in optimising overall maternal health.

A comprehensive literature search was conducted wherein the articles from 2010 to 2024 were included using the search terms "Optimising Maternal Health", "Third Trimester Pregnancy" results from various digital databases like PubMed, Google Scholar, Ovid, Web of Science and the Cochrane Library. The search is then further filtered through the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

It was found that pranayamas (AnulomVilom (Alternate Nostril Breathing), Bhramari (Bee Breath), Ujjayi (Ocean Breath or Victorious Breath), NadiShodhana (Channel-Cleansing Breath), Dirga Pranayama (Three-Part Breath), Sheetali and Sheetkari (Cooling Breaths) during the third trimester of pregnancy offers a range of benefits for both mother and baby. Additionally, it strengthens lung capacity, refines breathing control, and prepares the body for the physical demands of childbirth. The study concludes that among pregnancy exercises, Pranayama is highly recommended. Pranayama yoga techniques are also believed to increase the chances of a natural and uncomplicated childbirth. Pranayama can be considered a valuable secondary supplementary therapy for enhancing health and well-being due to its affordability, ease of use and minimal risk profile.

Keywords: Cardiovascular, Maternal- Foetal Heart Rate, Pranav, Yoga