

YOGA HAS BEEN HELPING WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD FIND THEIR FITNESS AND HEALTH AGAIN AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO THEIR BUNDLE OF JOY. IF YOU'RE A NEW MUM OR SOON TO BE ONE, HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD ROLL OUT YOUR YOGA MAT.

BY JANIE LARMOUR

# The Benefits of Yoga Post-Baby

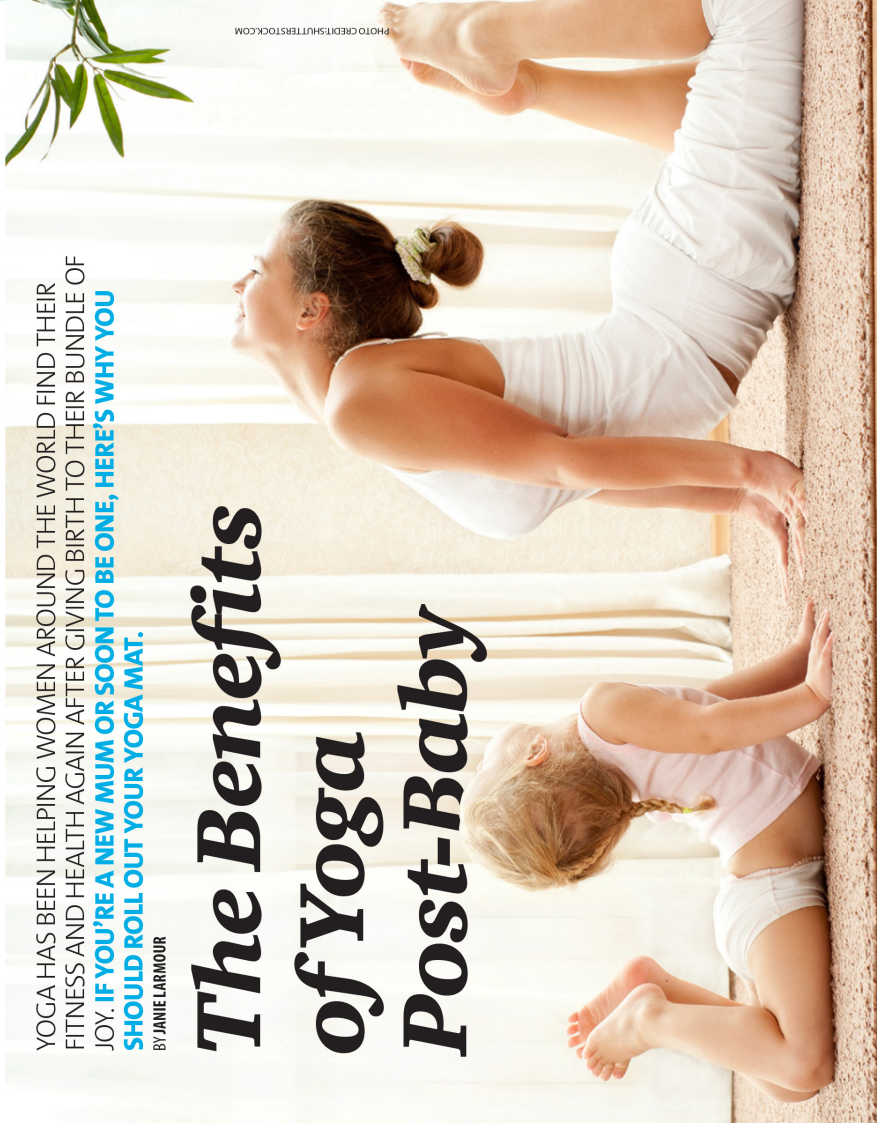


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**THE EXCITEMENT OF PREGNANCY AND THE ARRIVAL OF YOUR NEW BABY ARE OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY THE DENIAL OF SUCH A MASSIVE LIFE CHANGE. SUDDENLY YOU FIND THAT YOUR NEW LIFE LEAVES YOU NO TIME TO GO TO THE GYM AND DO ALL THE THINGS THAT YOU USED TO DO.** If you've previously kept yourself fit and healthy, the time after giving birth is the time you are going to be

the most body-conscious. Even though you know in your mind that it shouldn't matter, it is probably one of the things foremost in your mind. It's important to remember that you shouldn't do any real exercise for six to eight weeks after giving birth. The hormones released during the birth process soften your bones to allow for the birth, and you can really do some permanent

structural damage to your body if you exercise during this time. This is a great time to rest as much as possible, bond with your baby, spend time with the family and get used to the change in your life. After this time, you will be aching to get back to the gym or do some sort of exercise where you can get back into shape. Yoga is an amazing way of reconnecting with yourself at a time when

all of your energy is going outward, toward another life. It will also help you calm your mind and teach you techniques to stay centred among the chaos that comes with your new family life. Yoga can be great for weight loss post-baby. I've had students who have lost more of their baby weight from yoga classes than they have at the gym. Partly this is because they are reducing their stress, and a very big

part is just because they are more in touch with their body and what their body's needs are. Classes will assist in putting your organs back in place after they have been moved to make room for the baby, which also improves your digestive function and mind space. I'm sure you are aware that your headspace just isn't the same when your digestive system isn't functioning optimally!

Look out for yoga classes where you can take your baby with you. These might not be as relaxing, but at least you can fit them in without having to find someone to look after your little one.

Back pain is often a common complaint of new mothers due to all the lifting of the baby and the equipment such as prams and baby carriages. The balance of strengthening and stretching in yoga is perfect to combat this, as it not only strengthens your back with specific moves, but it also clears tightness from these muscles to stop a build-up of tension, which can be a cause of back pain and lead to weakness.

Yoga is well-known for relieving stress from the mind and body. While yoga is definitely not all about stretching, stretching in general can help you to relax, because it stimulates receptors in the nervous system that decrease the production of stress hormones and also assists in increasing circulation and blood flow.



**Lie on your back** and pull your right knee to your chest and hug it in close to relax the buttocks and the top of the hamstrings. Lock out your left leg (keep it on the floor), push through the heel and pull the left toes back so your Achilles tendon stretches.

**Place your left hand on your left thigh** and stretch those fingers strongly down the front of your thigh toward your kneecap. Now, extend your right leg up to the ceiling – and don't worry if your knee doesn't straighten completely; just get your leg to your maximum extension without straining or letting your foot go. Make

sure the right leg remains in line with your right shoulder.

**Hold this stretch and breathe normally.** After about 45 seconds, lower your leg to the floor and relax for a few moments. You will feel some pressure or heat around your kidneys on that right side after about 15 seconds. This is the kidney and the adrenal glands on top of the kidneys relaxing. Repeat on the other side. ●



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Janie Larmour has been a personal trainer since 1994 and a teacher of Zen Ki Yoga for 16 years. She owns two yoga studios in Sydney (Darlinghurst and Penrith), an online yoga website with more than 50 classes available online 24/7, and has 15 popular DVDs, including a women's health series. Janie has appeared on several television variety shows (on Channel 9/WIN Television). She runs Yoga Australia registered teacher training diploma courses in her studios and by distant education, regularly speaks at yoga festivals and teaches workshops on getting rid of back pain, anxiety and period pain in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. For more information visit [www.zenkiyoga.com](http://www.zenkiyoga.com)