

Mother and baby yoga: hip sequence No. 1

This is the first and simplest of three hip sequences you can practice with your baby. This sequence is suitable for babies from birth to eight weeks, but may also be enjoyed by older babies, particularly if you are both new to yoga.

The hip sequences all aim to strengthen the base of the spine which in yogic terms is considered to be the foundation of not just physical well-being but also emotional and mental well-being. The hip sequences as the name suggests also aim to maintain the flexibility of hip and knee movements with which babies are born. However, if your baby has 'clicky' or dislocated hips, you should avoid all of the practices which involve opening out the knees and which are marked with an asterisk(*). There are still many other yoga practices you can enjoy doing together.

As always in yoga, never force your baby to do a movement that he or she is resisting. Always be gentle and aware of how he or she is responding. If this is not the right time, then try some other time! Some gentle 'wriggling' of the legs between moves can help!

The hip sequences also work strongly on the digestive and eliminative systems, in other words they can help relieve discomfort from colic but you can also end up with a full nappy! It is a really good idea to get into a daily practice of doing a massage and a hip sequence with your baby every day, and try to avoid doing this only when he or she is fretful otherwise they may learn to associate the movements with discomfort.

A word on massage: always try to do a little massage with your baby before you embark on a hip sequence –even just a few moves will do if you do not have time for more. It will help to relax and encourage your baby to be more receptive to the yoga. Also ensure that you feel in the right mood – babies are very good at picking up our feelings! A few rounds of relaxed breathing before you start may help, and keep using your breath consciously as you carry out these movements.

Your baby does not need to be undressed for these movements. You may find it helpful to pop feet out of babygrow suits and also to loosen any tight or bulky nappies.

All of the pictures show the baby lying on his/ her back which is the ideal position. If your baby protests, you can try adapting these movements to when they are sitting upright supported by you – then try again some other day to lie them on their back. If your baby is on their back, make sure there is something cushioned under your baby's spine such as a flat cushion or a blanket.

Have fun with these moves – sing little songs as you do them or tell your baby what it is you are doing e.g. 'in' and 'out' or 'stretch' and 'relax'. If you are singing a song then keep to a rhythm that suits your baby rather than necessarily that of the music.

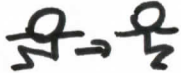
Hip sequence No. 1 – ideal for babies from birth to eight weeks

1 Knees to chest



Hold your baby's shins or calves (not knees) and gently bring both knees into the chest, as close together as the nappy allows. Press your baby's knees firmly into the sides of the abdomen then relax. Repeat at least 2-3 times.

2 Knees from side to side



Bring your baby's knees into their chest as above then gently move them to the left and then to the right, pressing firmly into the abdomen each side and giving your baby's spine a gentle twist. Repeat several times.

3 Pedal stretch (*)¹



Alternate bringing in one knee at a time to the chest in a gentle 'pedalling' movement.

4 Half lotus (*)



Holding on to your baby's shins, gently bring the left foot up to 'tickle' the right ribs. Do not force and press the heel on the side, wherever it reaches easily. Repeat on the other side.

5 Butterfly (*)



Gently encourage the soles of your baby's feet together by holding on to their shins and encouraging their knees to open out. Gently push the feet into the abdomen. Never force the hips to open out further than they want to go.

Always finish a hip sequence with a hip closing practice and with a leg stretch and drop movement.

Hip closing

Holding the outside edges of your baby's thighs, gently stroke the hips and thighs in towards each other, closing the legs from the tops all the way down to the knees and feet. Repeat 2-3 times.

Leg stretch and drop



This teaches the contrast between stretching and relaxing. Hold on to your baby's shins and gently lift a little, stretching them gently at the same time. Release your hold on the legs and let them drop loosely back down. Repeat several times. In time, you can lift the legs a little higher but always keep your baby's spine and bottom on the ground.

¹ Those practices marked with a (*) are not suitable for babies with hip problems.

P.T.O.