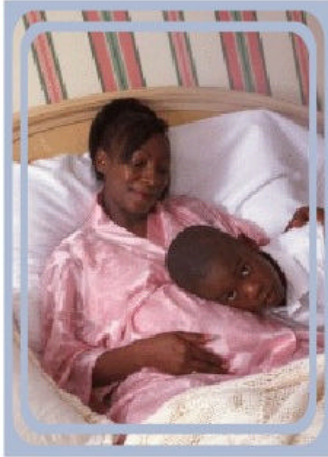


**Eastern Virginia Medical School
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine**

Hofheimer Hall, 825 Fairfax Ave. Suite 310, Norfolk, VA. 23507
Telephone (757) 446-7900 Fax (757) 625-5309



BED REST IN PREGNANCY



Being put on "bed rest" has many meanings, depending on the complication that leads a doctor to prescribe it. Some women are asked to nap or rest twice a day while others are only allowed to get up to go to the bathroom or to eat meals. Some women are asked to STAY IN BED, but not necessarily to lie down the entire time.

They may be allowed to sit up in bed or on a couch. Others are asked not to sit up, but to lie on their side as much as possible. Still others are not allowed up for any reason (these women are often hospitalized).

HOW DOES BED REST HELP?

Lying down may decrease uterine contractions by taking the pressure of the baby's head off the cervix and lower uterine segment.

Lying on your side (left more than right) allows optimal blood flow to the uterus and placenta, thus increasing oxygen and nutrition to the uterus and the baby. If you lie flat on your back, the weight of the baby and uterus presses on the blood vessels supplying blood to and from the uterus.

REASONS WHY YOU MAY NEED TO GO ON BED REST WHILE YOU ARE PREGNANT

- BLEEDING AT ANY TIME DURING PREGNANCY
- PREMATURE LABOR CONTRACTIONS
- INTRAUTERINE GROWTH RESTRICTION (WHEN THE BABY'S GROWTH LAGS BEHIND WHERE IT SHOULD BE FOR HIS/HER PREGNANCY AGE)
- HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE)
- PREECLAMPSIA (A METABOLIC DISORDER IN PREGNANCY WHICH INCLUDES HYPERTENSION, PROTEIN IN THE URINE AND SWELLING)
- TWINS, TRIPLETS OR MORE
- INCOMPETENT CERVIX (A CONDITION IN WHICH THE CERVIX OPENS PAINLESSLY DURING THE FOURTH THROUGH SIXTH MONTHS OF PREGNANCY)

This Information is For Educational Purposes Only
Always Consult Your Health care Provider

“Most times, the longer the baby stays in the uterus, the better his/her chances are of doing well at birth”.

Being put on bed rest may create a very sudden change from your expected plans and it will take time to adjust. Many women are frightened when they think of having a complication that requires bed rest. They may worry about the baby being in danger or that they, themselves are in danger.

It is a good idea to share these fears with your doctor and get the facts, instead of worrying over the unknown or misunderstood. Most times, the longer the baby stays in the uterus, the better his/her chances are of doing well at birth.

Lack of support and loneliness are problems for some women on bed rest. Sometimes friends avoid calling because they do not want to disturb you. Encourage them to call and perhaps let them know a good time to call so that they do not feel that they are interrupting your rest. Sometimes too many friends and family call and you cannot get the rest you need. Do not hesitate to be honest with them and let them know how you feel.

Being on bed rest can affect your entire self-image. Instead of your normal activities, you now assume the role of a "patient", often dependent on others. This may take some getting used to. It is often hard to accept that you must rest in bed, especially if you feel well.

You may be expected to feel cooperative, dependent and grateful, when instead you may feel angry, helpless and frustrated. Bed rest is stressful, and anger and frustration are normal responses. Many women resent bed rest, and then they feel guilty about their resentment. In addition to having more to do at home, your significant "other" may also be worried about you and the baby.

He may feel resentful at times because he is "doing everything" - your job and his, especially if you do not appear "sick". He then may feel guilty about feeling resentful. All of those factors put stress on the relationship between husband and wife. Encourage your significant "other" to visit the doctor with you so he can ask questions and get a better understanding of the situation.

If you have older children, they may also be worried about seeing you in bed. It is helpful to explain honestly what the problem is and to let them know how valued their help is. Even very young children may sense that something is wrong and they may need extra reassurance that they are loved and that you will be all right. Younger children cannot understand why you cannot pick them up or play with them. Have toddlers come to where you are to read or play.

PHYSICAL CONCERNS

Bed rest means you are less mobile, therefore digestive processes may slow down, increasing the possibility of constipation. You can decrease the chances of this by drinking more fluids and eating more foods that are high in fiber like whole grain breads and cereals, fruits, and vegetables. If you eat something high in fiber, be SURE to drink a glass of water with it to avoid making it worse. If you are not anemic, you might take your prenatal iron tablet every other day, rather than every day if approved by your physician.

If both parents were working, there may be a decrease in income while you are on bed rest. Check with your employer about sick leave and disability benefits that may be available at your job and see if you are eligible. You may also explore the possibility of working at home while you are on bed rest.

Try to keep your days and nights separate. It is easy to nap during the days and nights causing disoriented sleep patterns, which can lead to depression.

To start the day, brush your hair and dress in something attractive, like a pretty nightgown. Take a warm bath or shower each morning. If your doctor has confined you to the bed, have someone give you a sponge bath while you sit up in bed. This can signal the beginning of a new day and ease muscles that have been made stiff by bed rest.

Start organizing your time by writing down all the things you have pushed aside saying that you would do them when you had more time. You have more time right now. Finish your old business and start new projects.

If you are required to stay at "bed rest", here are a few ways to help you keep your mind off your problems.

- Buy a book that shows you how your baby is growing each week. Start a pregnancy journal/diary
- Say yes to ANYONE who offers to help
- Catch up with friends by writing letters or phoning them
- Move to another room during the day
- Read books that you've always wanted to read or have someone get you some audio books on tape
- Ask friends to bring over their own lunch and visit
- Knit, crochet, or do a needlework project
- Make plans for when your baby comes
- List all the stressful things you don't have to do
- Learn to speak another language
- Do crossword puzzles
- Catch up on projects such as photo albums, sorting recipes, going through old letters, etc.
- Volunteer your services for phone calling for community organizations, addressing envelopes, etc.

The following is a list of NECESSITIES you should have within arm's reach:

- A bell (to ring for assistance)
- A television/VCR set (if not in arm's reach, with remote control device)
- Reading material - books, magazines, puzzles, books on tapes
- Radio, stereo
- Cassette tape recorder/Walkman
- Telephone (tape your doctor's number and emergency number on the side Telephone address book
- Yellow pages directory and local telephone directory Water pitcher and glass
- Thermos for hot water
- Picnic cooler to hold lunch, snacks
- Plastic flexi-straws (a necessity when you are lying down)
- Tissues
- Moisturizing lotions (your skin will need extra help when you are indoors)
- Hairbrush, comb, mirror, your makeup
- Nail files, scissors for manicures (don't ask about pedicures when you're pregnant, it's hard enough to find your feet)
- Cleansing wipes for quick cleaning of hands and face
- Hard surface for writing. Use a tray or get a big art book or record jacket and tape it to a pillow. This will turn into an instant lap desk for eating, writing or to rest objects on
- A large desk calendar (the size of a desk blotter)
- Pictures or posters of landscapes, seascapes, street scenes
- Photographs of those you love
- Plants, flowers
- Bowl of potpourri or aromatherapy lamp
- Two-way talking device
- Sonar-sensitive attachment for your appliances ("clap on, clap off)
- Fish tank
- Someone to help you change sheets on your bed regularly A "body" pillow
- An egg crate mattress for your bed
- Someone to massage your feet

CAN I EXERCISE WHILE ON BED REST?

BEFORE DOING ANY EXERCISE ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR.

Being on "bed rest" can make a patient achy and non-compliant. Passive range of motion exercises may be of help and involve somebody else moving your legs and arms for you.

Basic range of motion loosens joints (i.e., roll shoulders, circle head, etc.); isometric exercises for circulation (tighten and relax muscles); kegel and pelvic tilt exercises (pulling in abdominal muscles, squeeze buttock muscles, flatten back, etc.) may tone the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles as well as relieving tension from your back muscles.

Follow your exercise sessions with a large glass of water or juice.