

*If you have
any questions,
please ask
your physician
or nurse.*

Bed Rest During Pregnancy

Your physician has suggested that you follow these instructions for bed rest during your pregnancy. Bed rest may help prevent early labor for you. It can protect the health and well-being of your unborn baby.

Limiting your activity with bed rest can:

- Reduce pressure of the baby on your cervix. Cervical pressure can trigger labor contractions.
- Improve the flow of blood to the placenta. This increased blood flow allows the placenta to send more oxygen and nutrition to your baby. This helps your baby grow.
- Help your heart and kidneys to work better. This reduces high blood pressure.

Questions to ask your healthcare provider

Consider asking your healthcare provider these questions:

- How many hours a day do I need to stay in bed?
- Can I be on bed rest at home and limit my activities?
- Can I walk to the bathroom and take a shower?
- What activities will I be able to do?
- Can I have sexual intercourse?

Maintaining a healthy diet

Drink 8 to 12 cups of water or fluids a day. This will help prevent premature contractions and constipation. Try to eat fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain breads and cereals.

Your physician may order a stool softener if you feel constipated.

To decrease feeling bloated or too full, have 6 to 8 small meals a day. Be sure to take all vitamins and medicines as prescribed. For more diet tips, ask your nurse for the brochure, *Nutrition and Pregnancy*.

Coping with stress

The loss of your normal routines can feel stressful at times. Here are some ways to cope:

- Maintain a schedule during the day. Plan time to make phone calls, have visitors, nap, read or write letters.

- Ask friends and family for help. Make a checklist of tasks that others may help you with. Tasks may be grocery shopping, trips to the library to borrow books or DVDs, errands or child care, if needed.
- Consider trying hobbies, like knitting or crossword puzzles, that you can do while on bed rest. Work on your laptop to update files (such as your photos, address book or recipes), but just for short periods of time.
- Keep a daily journal of your days on bed rest. Write notes about the movement of your baby, tests that were done, and how you are feeling. This is good information to share with your physician.

Relaxation exercises can also help:

- Lessen stress
- Reduce anxiety
- Improve sleep
- Improve energy

Rhythmic breathing

Breathing in a controlled, relaxed pattern can help reduce stress. Follow these steps to practice rhythmic breathing.

1. Get in a comfortable position lying on your back or sitting up in bed. If you are sitting, keep your back straight and shoulders relaxed.
2. Close your eyes. Focus on your breathing. Feel your abdomen rise and fall with each breath.
3. Breathe in slowly as you say to yourself, “In, 2, 3, 4.”
4. Breathe out slowly as you say to yourself, “Out, 2, 3, 4.”
5. Feel yourself begin to relax. Allow the tension to leave your body. If other thoughts enter your mind, re-focus on your breathing.

Do rhythmic breathing for 15 to 20 minutes each day or in 10-minute segments, twice a day.

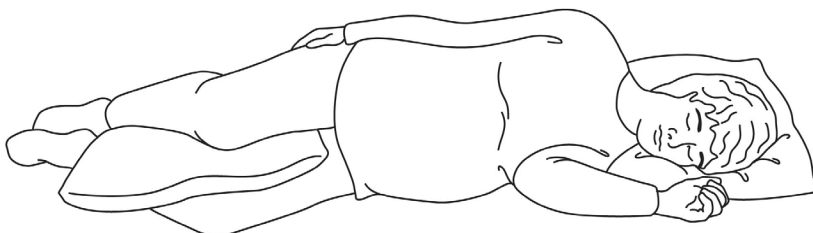
If you are in the hospital, ask your nurse how to access relaxation videos in your room.

Comfort positions

These positions will help you relax and increase blood flow to the placenta.

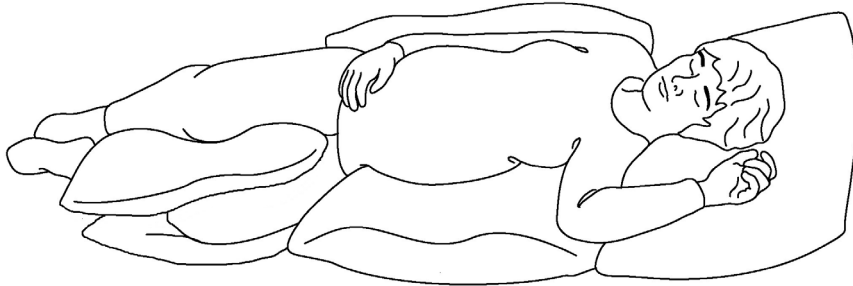
Lying on your side

- Place a pillow between your knees.
- After the second trimester, place a small pillow under your belly.
- Keep your neck in a comfortable position.
- Hug a pillow to support your arms and upper body.



Lying at an angle

- Place pillows behind you to position yourself halfway between lying on your back and on your side.
- Place a pillow under your bottom knee for support.
- Place a small pillow under your belly.



Follow these tips, as well, when you are on bed rest:

- Change your positions every 1 to 2 hours. Doing so can prevent pressure injuries on your skin.
- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Use moisturizing cream to avoid dryness.
- Place pillows under your calves. This can prevent pressure injuries to your heels.

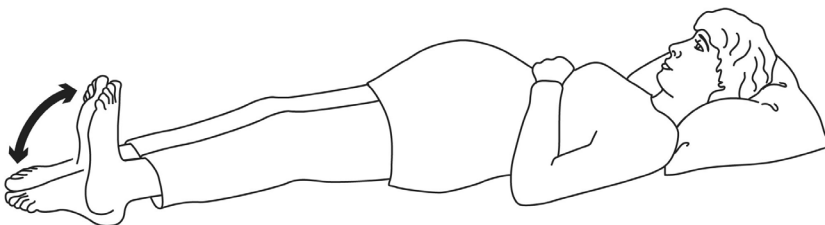
Keeping fit

These simple exercises will help maintain your strength and the range of motion in your arms and legs. If you have pain while exercising, stop the activity. Do not do any exercises that use your core or abdominal muscles.

Leg and foot exercises

Ankle circles and foot pumps may also improve blood flow to your legs. This reduces the risk of blood clots in your legs.

1. With your legs out straight, point your toes toward the end of the bed. Relax. Then point your toes toward your chin. Repeat 15 times.



2. Move each foot at the ankle, making circles. Do this exercise 15 times.

If you are in the hospital and on bed rest, your physician may ask you to wear sequential compression devices (SCDs). These boots gently squeeze your calves to:

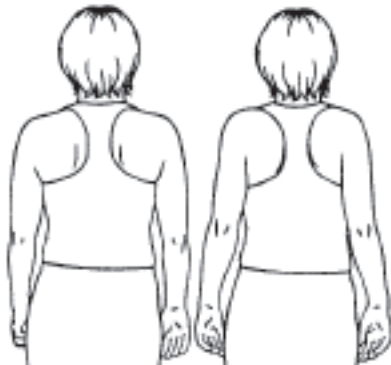
- Promote blood flow to your heart.
- Help reduce the risk of blood clots in your legs.

Sitting exercises

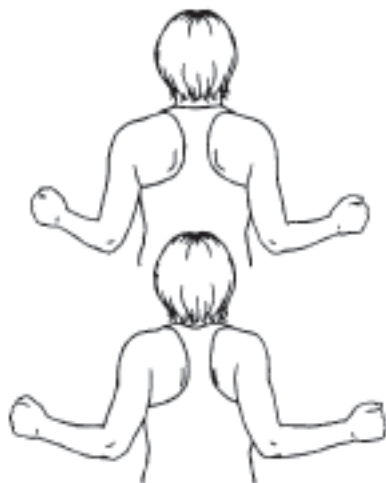
You can do these exercises while you are sitting up in bed if your physician tells you it is OK to do so.



Turn your head slowly to look over your right shoulder; hold the position for 5 seconds. Then turn to look over your left shoulder; hold for 5 seconds. Repeat these steps 5 times. Do this exercise 2 to 3 times a day.



With your arms at your sides, pinch your shoulder blades together. Repeat this 5 times. Do this exercise 2 to 3 times a day.



With your elbows bent at a 90-degree angle, pinch your shoulder blades together and rotate your arms out, keeping your elbows bent. Repeat this 5 times. Do this exercise 2 to 3 times a day.

Kegel exercises

You may do these exercises if your physician tells you it is OK to do so.

The muscles around the urethra, vagina and rectum stretch during pregnancy. This stretching may lead to slight leaking of urine when coughing or laughing. Kegel exercises can strengthen the pelvic floor muscles to avoid this leakage.

To do Kegel exercises:

- Tighten or contract your muscles where you pass urine and your vaginal muscles for 3 seconds. Then relax the muscles for 3 seconds. Do not use your abdominal muscles.
- Increase the time you contract your muscles to 10 seconds, still relaxing your muscles for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times. Do these exercises 3 times a day.
- Slowly increase the number of Kegel exercises to 50 per day.

Going home after a hospital stay

Your physician and nurse will give you guidelines about:

- Diet
- Activity guidelines (such as bed rest, sex, driving, lifting and work)
- Medications
- Follow-up physician visits
- Who to call with questions

When to call the physician

Call your physician right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations (feeling your heart “flutter”)
- Chest pain
- Headache during exercise
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Vaginal bleeding
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Contractions
- Nausea or dizziness
- Extreme fatigue
- Swelling or pain in the calves
- Leaking of amniotic fluid (“water breaking”)
- Feeling like your baby is moving less