

## During Pregnancy: Bed Rest at Its Best

Your doctor has suggested bed rest for you during your pregnancy to:

- Prevent early onset of labor.
- Protect the health and well-being of your unborn baby.

### **Bed Rest Helps**

- 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, helping your baby to grow.
- Your heart and kidneys to work better and reduce high blood pressure.

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

The following questions may be helpful to ask your health care provider while on bed rest.

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

## Taking Care

### **Maintain a Healthy Diet**

Drink 8 to 12 cups of water or fluids a day. This will help prevent premature contractions and constipation. Other ways to prevent constipation include eating:

- Whole-grain breads and cereals
- Fresh fruits and vegetables

Your doctor may order a stool softener if you are feeling 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**

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 getting groceries, 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. “Surf the net,” find peer support online, or work on those laptop computer files that need updating (such as photos, address book or recipe files), but just for short periods of time.
- Maintain a daily journal of your days on bed rest. Write notes about the movement of the baby, tests that were done, and how you are feeling. This is a good resource when giving a history to many doctors.

Relaxation exercises can also help:

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

### ***One way is to practice rhythmic breathing:***

Get in a comfortable position, lying on your back or sitting up in bed. If sitting, keep your back straight and shoulders relaxed.

- Close your eyes. Focus on your breathing; feel your abdomen rise and fall with each breath.
- Breathe in as you say “in, two, three.”
- As you breathe out slowly, feel yourself begin to relax. Allow the tension to leave your body.
- Continue to re-focus on your breathing, should other thoughts enter your mind.

Rhythmic breathing can be done for 15 to 20 minutes each day or in 10-minute segments, twice a day.

*If you are in the hospital, there are videos that show other methods of relaxation:*

- Relaxing Through the Seasons (#121)
- Rhythmic Medicine (#122 and #123)

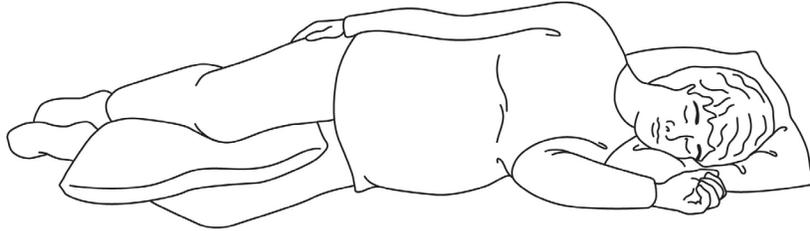
Ask your nurse how to access these videos in your room.

## **Comfort**

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

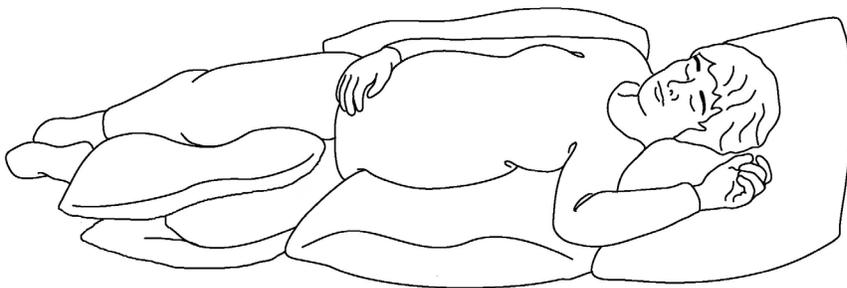
## On Your Side

- Pillows between the knees.
- Small pillow under your belly after the second trimester.
- Neck in a comfortable position.
- Hug a pillow to support your arms and upper body.



## $\frac{3}{4}$ Supine

- Body pillows behind you to position you half way between lying on your back and on your side.
- Pillow under the bottom knee for support.
- Small pillow under the belly.



Other tips include:

- Changing positions every 1 to 2 hours.
- Keeping skin clean and dry.
- Using cream to avoid dryness.
- Placing pillows under calves to prevent heel pressure.

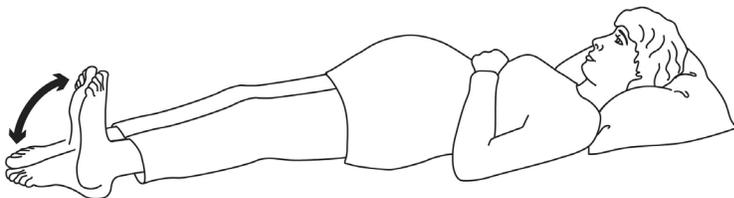
## Keeping Fit

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

### ***Leg and Foot Exercises***

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

1. With your legs out straight, point the toes of both feet toward the end of the bed. Relax. Then point the 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 doctor may order DVT Prevention Boots. These boots gently squeeze your calves to:

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

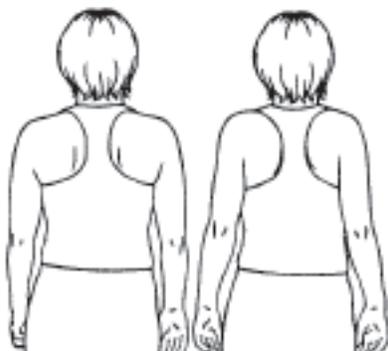
### ***Sitting Exercises (with your doctor's okay)***

These exercises may also be done while sitting up in bed.

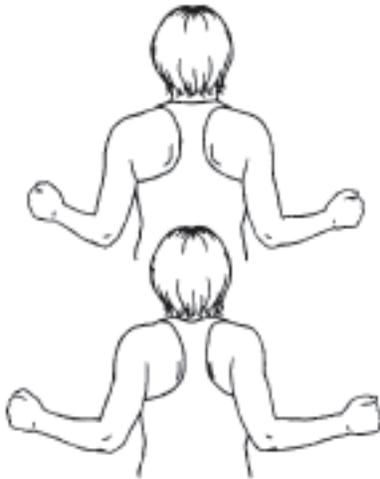
Turn head slowly to look over 1 shoulder; hold the position for 5 seconds. Then turn to look over your other shoulder; hold for 5 seconds. Repeat these steps 5 times. Do this exercise 2 to 3 times a day.



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



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



### ***Kegel Exercises (with your doctor's okay)***

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

To do Kegel exercises:

- Tighten or contract the muscles where you pass urine and the vaginal muscles for 3 seconds, then relax the muscles for 3 seconds. Do not use your abdominal muscles.
- Increases the time you contract the muscle to 10 seconds, still relaxing the muscle 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 doctor and nurse will provide detailed discharge instructions about:

- Diet
- Activity guidelines (such as bedrest, sex, driving, lifting and work)
- Needed medicines
- Follow-up doctor visits
- Who to call with questions

## When to Call the Doctor

***Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following:***

- 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”)
- Decreased movement from baby

### **Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources**

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

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