

Bedrest

To state the obvious, bedrest means just that: resting in bed. But each woman's situation varies. You may be assigned strict bedrest or a less limiting kind; you may spend most of your pregnancy in bed, or just the last few weeks. It depends on your pregnancy and your provider's assessment.

Whether you've been sent to bed for two weeks or six months, take some comfort in knowing you are not alone: Each year, as many as one-fifth of all pregnant women are prescribed bedrest for a variety of reasons. Though bedrest is controversial because its benefits are not backed up by much medical research, the goal of bedrest is to keep your baby inside you, developing in your uterus, for as long as possible.

Questions For Your Provider

Bedrest means something different for every woman, so be prepared to ask your healthcare provider a lot of questions. "Can I take a shower?" "Can I have sex?" "Can I walk around at all?" The answers will depend on your particular condition and how cautionary you need to be.

The following list can help you nail down the specifics:

- ✓ How long do you want me on bedrest?
- ✓ How should I change my general activity level?
- ✓ Can I work outside the home? Can I work at home?
- ✓ How much walking can I do?
- ✓ How much standing can I do?
- ✓ Can I drive at all?
- ✓ Can I do any household chores? Which ones?
- ✓ What about childcare?
- ✓ Can I lift anything? Nothing larger / heavier than?
- ✓ Are there any exercises I can do while on bedrest?
- ✓ What level of sexual activity can I have?
- ✓ Can I move to the living room sofa during the day?
- ✓ What position should I rest in?
- ✓ Can I take a shower?
- ✓ Can I get up to use the toilet?

Survival Tips & Tricks

When you are sent to bed, you may feel exiled from the world. Even if you greet the news with some pleasure (now you can finally catch up on all the reading and movies you never seem to have time for), the realities of bed confinement will soon hit home.

On bedrest you give up much more than your normal schedule. You need to devise new ways to connect with family members, take care of household chores, and stay in touch with your profession. You need to consider how bedrest affects your marriage or partnership, your relationship with your children, and even your personal vision of yourself during this time.

If you're facing a long bedrest, try to prepare yourself emotionally. Expect your feelings to swing from denial and shock to depression and panic to enjoyable, bright expectations. You may also find yourself thinking back to your early pregnancy and wondering what you did to end up on bedrest. (The answer: nothing. It's not your fault.) Be assured, these thoughts and feelings are absolutely normal.

Remind yourself and others around you of your ultimate goal - a full-term baby. This will help minimize the worry, anger, frustration, and boredom that often come with bedrest. Remember, you are free from some of the physical and emotional stresses you may face in a typical day - and so is your baby.

- ✓ Pack a cooler with a lunch, snacks, and beverages.
- ✓ Move the telephone within reach, and consider putting the TV and VCR into your room as well.
- ✓ Catch up on your reading. If friends ask how they can help, suggest they bring books to share with you.
- ✓ Figure out ways to let family and friends help if they've offered. Keep a list of chores you'd feel comfortable asking them to do and know that most people are probably much more eager to help than you imagine. Let them know which meals are your favorites.
- ✓ Create a calendar that shows who has offered to help on which days. Knowing you have someone's help or some event to anticipate will minimize stretches without help or company.
- ✓ Keep regular times for activities, visits, and naps.
- ✓ Rent movies, invite friends over for a Friday night video and pizza party in your bedroom, pull out the old board games. Let yourself have a good time.