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8 Ways to Deal With Bed Rest Angst

Stuck in bed until your baby is born? Learn how to deal with the daily struggles of bed rest.

By Jenilee Matz, MPH, Staff Writer, myOptumHealth



A prescription to lie in bed may seem like a dream come true. But bed rest during pregnancy can be anything but relaxing. Evenings out with friends, grocery shopping and cooking may be put on hold until your baby is born.

What is bed rest?

Bed rest is sometimes prescribed during pregnancy. It may be suggested to help prevent preterm birth or treat other complications.

There are different degrees of bed rest. Your doctor may order a few hours of bed rest per day or prescribe complete bed rest. Sometimes, your doctor will require bed rest in the hospital. Your doctor will let you know how much activity you're allowed to do. Be sure to ask exactly what you can and can't do while on bed rest.

No matter what type of bed rest you are prescribed, it's important that you listen to your doctor. Bed rest may be what's best for both you and your unborn baby.

Why you may be prescribed bed rest

If you experience any of the following conditions during pregnancy, your doctor may order bed rest:

- Premature labor
- Vaginal bleeding
- Premature rupture of membranes
- Problems with the cervix or placenta
- High blood pressure, preeclampsia or eclampsia
- Pregnant with multiples
- Gestational diabetes

Experts are not sure of the benefit of bed rest on premature labor, though it is still often prescribed for this. More research is needed.

How to cope

Many women struggle to cope with bed rest. With good reason, too. You may be unable to work, exercise, cook or do other things that make you feel like you, until the baby is born.

Keep in mind that this situation is temporary. And it's what's best for your baby's health. These eight tips may make your bed rest experience more pleasant:

1. **Get support.** Consider joining an online support group to connect with other women on bed rest. Ask friends and family to visit you each day. They can bring you food, movies or reading material or just keep you company.
2. **Have a routine.** Time will pass more quickly if you have a set schedule. Wake up around the same time each morning, wash up (if you can), eat breakfast and start your day. Have an agenda for the day. For example, always eat lunch at noon or make phone calls at a set time.
3. **Stay connected.** Use a phone, MP3 player, computer with Internet and a TV for entertainment purposes and to connect with others. You can still talk to your friends and family and stay up-to-date on the latest news.
4. **Catch up.** Between working, prenatal doctor appointments and being a wife or partner, friend and expectant mother, something has likely slipped by the wayside. Use this time to get your finances in order, organize your recipe box or catch up with people you don't talk to as often as you'd like. Write letters or keep a journal, scrapbook or learn to knit.
5. **Prepare for your baby.** Use the Internet to order baby items such as diapers, bottles and clothes. Read up on tips in parenting magazines or check out myoptumhealth.com's parenting hub and children's health hub. If you're at risk for or know your baby will have a medical complication, do your research. Learning more about a condition will make you feel better equipped to manage it once your child is here.
6. **Keep things accessible.** Try to set up near a bathroom, keep the phone and TV remote close, and stock healthy snacks and water nearby. Make sure all the objects you need during the day are within your reach.
7. **Request to work from home.** Ask if you can do your job from home, even if it's part time. Working will not only help financially, but may also help you deal with bed rest better. You will feel needed and time will pass more quickly.
8. **Ask for help.** Ask friends or family or hire someone to help with household chores, child and pet care. You may feel reassured knowing your house is tidy. Bed rest is especially challenging when you already have a child at home. Having someone care for your child will get rid of some of your stress.

Also, ask your doctor about massage to ease muscle aches and discomfort. Ask about physical therapy to help you maintain your muscle strength, joint flexibility and improve blood circulation. A physical therapist may also be able to help you learn comfortable ways to position yourself in bed.

Updated on **Monday, 2 Nov 2009** SOURCES:

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