Bedrest Exercises for Pregnancy

A simple exercise program will keep your muscles toned and improve your circulation while you are on bedrest. It helps your body:

- Tone muscles to reduce stiffness and muscle strain that occurs with bedrest. Muscles need to be strong for getting into or out of bed and to help with recovery after delivery.
- With good posture.
- Avoid problems with blood circulation, like deep vein clots in the legs and to increase blood flow to the uterus and fetus.
- Improve sensory information through joints and muscles.
- Reduce stress and boredom that happens with activity restriction.

How to exercise safely

- Do each exercise slowly. Movements should not need exertion. See how your body responds. Spread out exercises during the day.
- Avoid using your stomach muscles, straining and holding your breath.
- Report any uterine contractions, bleeding or amniotic fluid loss to your nurse or doctor.
- If you are allowed to walk, keep good posture.
- Do warm up exercises while sitting on the side of the bed.

Bedrest exercise list

Try to do each exercise 2 to 3 times a day, with 5 to 10 repetitions. Go slowly and if you notice stress or strain, STOP. Do not use your stomach muscles for these exercises.

Neck and shoulder relaxation exercises

These exercises can be done lying down or sitting up. If your doctor has restricted your time sitting up, do them lying down. Slightly turn on one side or the other.

- Bring your chin in towards your chest. Slowly roll your head towards the left and then the right. Relax and repeat.
- Pull your shoulders up towards your ears. Roll your shoulders forwards in a circle, then backwards in a circle. Relax and repeat.
- Pull your shoulder blades together behind you. Relax and repeat.
- With your arms straight out in front of you, reach forward as far as possible. Relax and repeat.
Arms
These exercises can be done on your back or side, depending on your positioning needs.
• Tuck your chin and push the back of your head into the pillow. Then, stretch your arms down toward your knees, one at a time.
• Tighten and release your fists.
• Bend and straighten your elbows.
• Use one arm to draw a large circle in the air. Make circles bigger than smaller. Then switch to the other arm. Try this exercise then on your side going forward and backwards.

Legs, knees, ankles and feet
Do one leg then repeat with the other leg.
• Bend your leg at the hip and at the knee. Keep your heel flat on the bed. Slide your heel up towards your buttocks. Then, straighten the leg out.

• Bend your leg at the hip and at the knee. Keep your heel flat on the bed. Slide your foot to one side then back to the middle.

• Keep your left leg straight. Bend your right leg so the heel is flat on the bed. Place the right heel on top of the left ankle. Slide your right foot up the left leg until it reaches the knee. Then, slide it back down to the ankle.

• To help with your leg muscles, try these exercises on your back or sitting up:
  › On your back: Keep legs straight and toes pointed toward the ceiling. Tighten your thigh muscles, pulling your kneecaps toward your waist. Hold for 5 seconds and release.
  › Sitting up: Bend and straighten your knee 5 to 10 times. Then straighten one knee in front of you and pump your foot and ankle. Do this activity if you can sit up for meals or if you can get up to use the toilet or bedside commode.
• For your knees, keep your legs straight on the bed, and roll your knees inward and outward.

• For your ankles, move your foot up and down in a pumping motion about 15 to 20 times every 1 to 2 hours.

• For your feet, move your foot around in a circle. Repeat in the other direction. Keep your legs on the bed when doing this exercise.

**Getting in and out of bed when on bedrest**

**Move slowly and ask for help when getting out of bed.** Do warm up exercises before you get out of bed, such as ankle pumps and circles. This will get your body ready for movement.

• **To move from side to side in bed:**
  Keep your head on the pillow and roll like a log.
• **To sit up in bed**: Keep your head on the pillow and use the up button on your electric hospital bed.

Roll to one side. Use both arms to push yourself up to a sitting position while you swing your legs over the edge of the bed.

Never sit straight up without using your hands or turning to one side first.

**Using a bedpan**

To get onto and off a bedpan:

- Lie flat on your back in bed and keep your head on the pillow. Slightly raise the head of the electric bed. This will make using the bedpan more comfortable.
- Bend both knees and put both feet flat on the bed. Lift your bottom.
- Slide the bedpan beneath you. Remove the bed pan in the same way with the bed flat.
Comfort during bedrest

To prevent muscle discomfort from staying in bed, use pillows and the electric bed controls to reduce muscle strain and overstretching. Be aware of how you are positioned in bed to keep yourself comfortable.

- When in bed, no matter what position, try to keep your spine as straight as possible. Twisting or sagging of your spine can cause muscle strain. Keep your joints supported.
- Place a small towel roll under your lower back to provide added support.

- Lying on your left side is the best position for the most blood flow to your uterus and the baby. Place a pillow under your stomach, between your knees or behind your back to avoid strains. Ask your nurse for extra pillows.

Deep breathing and relaxation

- Lie on your side or back with knees bent. Rest one hand on your stomach. Breathe in deeply through the nose so your hand is pushed up by your stomach. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. Repeat deep breathing 5 times.
- Close your eyes. Beginning with your toes and feet, relax each body part as you work your way up your body. Relax your thighs, buttocks, back, shoulders, head and neck. Relax your jaw, eyelids and forehead. Imagine yourself enjoying a feeling of calm.
- Have your support person or health care team member give a massage.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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