

# ***GUIDE***

## **Your Activity Guide**



**The Ottawa | L'Hôpital  
Hospital | d'Ottawa**

### ***Disclaimer***

*This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your healthcare provider who will be able to determine the appropriateness of the information for your specific situation.*

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# **Your Rest and Activity Plan**

Your doctor is recommending that you reduce your activity until your baby is born. The amount of rest you need is specific to your situation, and may change as your pregnancy progresses.

When you are resting it is important that you are on your side, and not flat on your back. Being on your side improves the blood flow to your uterus, placenta and baby. You can also sit or recline with your feet up. Whichever position you choose, make yourself comfortable by using pillows to support your back, neck, head and legs. Change your position regularly. Make sure you get plenty of sleep at night. Speak with your doctor or nurse about the exercises you can do while you are on bed rest.

Activity restrictions or bed rest can be lonely for many women. Make plans for family and friends to visit you. Don't be afraid to accept help when it is offered.

It is important for you to follow the rest and activity plan outlined here for you. If you have any problems following these guidelines speak with your doctor or nurse. They may be able to help you. You may need to make some financial, child care and transportation arrangements so you are able to follow the recommended activity restrictions.

I **WOULD** recommend restricting one or more of the following activities.

(**CHECK ALL** that apply from the list below).

ACTIVITIES	STOP DOING	REDUCE
Working outside the home		
Work at home (home office)		
Child care responsibilities		
Toddlers and preschool children		
School age and independent		
Household tasks (laundry, cleaning)		
Meal preparation		
Prolonged standing (greater than 2 hrs.)		
Walking around outside		
Walking around the house		
Stairs		
Driving the car		
Use of Public transport		
Sexual activity		

# The Effects of Activity Restriction During Pregnancy

Your prenatal care provider has recommended that you reduce your activity level to try and help prolong your pregnancy. This increased rest will have other effects on your body that need to be planned for.

## ***Constipation***

When you are pregnant you are more likely to be constipated. Activity restrictions or bed rest can increase the chances of you becoming constipated or make any existing constipation worse.

*You can help avoid constipation by:*

- Drinking at least 6 - 8 glasses of fluid a day. Try to avoid drinks with caffeine in them.
- Having a hot drink before breakfast.
- Increasing the amount of fibre in your diet. Use a variety of sources such as fresh fruit and vegetables, dried fruit and nuts, grain products. Speak with a dietician for more suggestions. Remember to increase the fibre in your diet slowly to avoid the discomfort of gas and cramping.
- Go to the toilet as soon as you need to.
- Speak to your doctor about a stool softener.

## ***Heartburn***

Many women have heartburn during their pregnancy. You may or may not notice an increase in your heartburn with the activity restrictions recommended to you.

Speak with your doctor about medication and speak to a dietician for suggestions on how to change your diet to help relieve your heartburn. Some things you can do to try and relieve your heartburn are:

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals.
- Avoid foods that give you heartburn.
- Try to sit or recline after eating. Don't lie down immediately after you finish eating.
- Stop smoking or try to cut back on the amount you smoke.

## ***Weight Changes***

Every woman's reaction to reduced activity in pregnancy is different. Some women gain weight because of eating to relieve boredom. Some women lose weight because of stress and the loss of appetite which comes with reduced activity. Here are some suggestions which may help prevent each of these problems:

### **Increased appetite and weight gain:**

You may find yourself snacking more often because you are bored. This, along with your reduced activity,

can lead to an increased weight gain. To help you avoid this you can try to:

- Eat at regular times.
- Eat more low energy, high nutrient foods such as raw vegetables, fresh fruit, skimmed milk, and low fat yogurt.
- Drink plenty of water, especially before and with your meals.
- Avoid snacks that are high in fat and added sugar.
- Avoid distractions such as the television when you are eating.
- Take your time and enjoy your meals and snacks. Eat slowly.
- Speak with a dietitian about planning your meals and snacks.

### **Decreased appetite and weight loss:**

When you rest more it is not unusual to feel less hungry. It is important that you eat 3 meals a day and have healthy snacks in between. This will help you to remain healthy, while allowing your baby to grow and develop.

*Things you can do to make sure you and your baby are getting all the nutrients you both need are:*

- Eat at regular times.
- Eat small meals with regular snacks.

- Choose foods that are high in energy and nutrients such as whole milk, milk shakes, yogurts, dried fruit and nuts.
- Drink liquids after a meal, instead of before or during your meal.
- Speak with a dietitian about planning your meals and snacks.

## ***Insomnia (Difficulty Sleeping)***

When you reduce how much you do during the day you may find you have trouble sleeping at night.

*Some things you can do to try and help you sleep are:*

- Make sure you get up and get dressed in the morning, and get ready for bed at night.
- Don't spend your day in bed in your bedroom. Bed rest doesn't mean you have to stay in bed. You can rest on the couch with your family around you. This will get you out of your bedroom and will help you feel less lonely.
- Have a warm, milky drink before you go to bed.
- Speak with your nurse or doctor if you continue to have trouble sleeping.

# ***Muscle Weakness and General Fatigue***

When you reduce the amount of activity you do each day, your muscles start to lose some of their strength and you start to feel tired and weak even though you are resting for most of the day.

- It is important for you to move your arms and legs and change your position as much as possible.
- Do the exercises described in the next section titled *“Exercises While on Bed Rest”*. Discuss with your doctor or nurse which exercises are best for you.

You will not be able to stop all the muscle weakness, but exercising will help reduce the weakness caused by your reduced activity level.

**Remember**, if you are having difficulty coping with your reduced activity level and the effects it is having on you, speak with your doctor or nurse. They are there to help you.

# Exercises While on Bed Rest

Your doctor has recommended you reduce your activity and spend most of your day resting.

This increased rest may help lengthen your pregnancy, but it will also leave you feeling tired and weak because you are not using your muscles as much as usual.

These exercises are designed to help reduce some of this weakness and fatigue. They will help your circulation and will help maintain some of your muscle strength.

It is important for you to watch the effects these exercises have on you. If you feel faint or dizzy, have any shortness of breath or pain you should stop and speak with your doctor before you start again. You should also stop immediately and call your doctor or Obstetrical Assessment Unit (OAU) if you notice any menstrual like cramping, unusual backache, bleeding, or pelvic pressure (pressure down low).

## ❖ ***Kegal Exercises***

### **Super Kegals:**

- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as hard as you can and count to 20. Relax.
- Repeat this exercise 10 times a day.
- You can also try this while emptying your bladder. Try and stop the flow of urine, hold it and then relax and

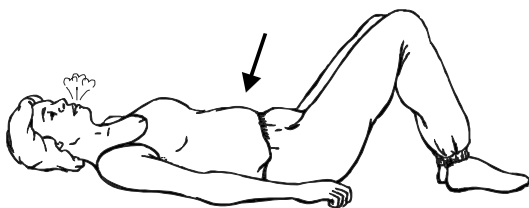
empty your bladder. This can be done once a day until you know which muscles to use and then once a week will be enough.

### **The elevator:**

- Imagine you are riding an elevator.
- Draw up your pelvic floor muscles a little at a time as you get to each floor.
- Gradually relax your muscles as smoothly as possible as you go down.
- To go to the basement, blow out gently through pursed lips and give a little push so you feel a bulge down below (in your perineum).
- Go back to the ground floor.
- Repeat this exercise twice a day, gradually increasing to 10 times, 3 times a day.

### ❖ ***Pelvic Tilt***

- Lie on your back with a pillow under your right hip and your knees bent.
- Flatten your lower back onto the floor or bed by pulling in your abdominal muscles and tucking in your buttocks.
- Hold for 5 seconds and relax.
- Repeat 10 times, twice a day.



## ❖ ***Neck Exercises***

1. Tilt your head sideways to the right, so your right ear goes towards your right shoulder. Don't raise your shoulder to meet your ear. Return head to normal position.
  - Repeat on the left side.
2. Turn your head to the right and then to the left.
3. Make slow circles with your head first to the right and then to the left. Do not tilt your head back when making these circles.

## ❖ ***Isometrics***

1. Tuck in your chin to make a double chin.
  - Push your shoulders back at the same time.
  - Put your hands on your forehead.
  - Push your head into your hands and your hands into your head so nothing moves. You should feel the muscles in the front of your neck tighten.
  - Hold for 5 seconds and relax.
2. Repeat with your hands clasped behind your head.
  - Hold for 5 seconds and relax.
3. Repeat with your right hand on the right side of your head.
  - Hold for 5 seconds and relax.
4. Repeat with your left hand on the left side of your head.
  - Hold for 5 seconds and relax.

Repeat each of these exercise 5 times, 3 times a day. Gradually increase the number of times you do the exercises to 20 times, 3 times a day.

## ❖ **Foot Exercises**

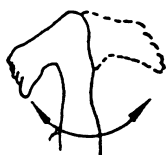
### **Foot pumps**

- Sit or lie down with your legs on a pillow and your feet up.
- Pull your toes towards you and then point your toes towards the floor.



### **Foot circles**

- Make slow circles with each foot in one direction.
- Repeat in the opposite direction.



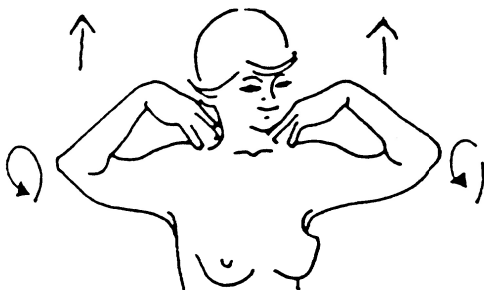
### **Foot resistance**

- Lie down with a pillow under your right hip.
- Put your feet flat against the footboard of your bed, the arm of your couch or the wall.
- Push both feet against the footboard.
- Hold for 5 seconds and relax.
- Repeat 5 times and gradually increase the number of times you do this to 20, 3 times a day.

## ❖ ***Shoulder and Arm Exercises***

1. Shrug your shoulders up to your ears and relax.  
Repeat 10 times.

2. Put your hands on your shoulders, and make circles with your elbows and shoulders.



3. Keeping your arms straight and your elbows locked, raise your arms in front of you and over your head.

- Lower your arms and relax.
- Repeat 10 times.
- Breathe in as you raise your arms and breathe out as you lower them.

4. Raise your arms out to the side and then up to touch your ears. Keep your elbows straight.

- Lower your arms and relax.
- Repeat 10 times. Breathe in as you raise your arms and breathe out as you lower them.

5. Hold your arms up straight towards the ceiling.

- Breathe in as you open your arms out wide and lower them to shoulder level.
- Breathe out as you bring your arms to cross your chest.
- Relax and repeat 10 times.

6. Hold your arms up straight towards the ceiling.
- Reach up with your right hand and then your left, as if you are climbing a ladder.
  - Stretch and clench your fingers at the same time.
  - Repeat 5 times and relax.

Gradually increase the number of times you do these arm and shoulder exercises to 20 times, 3 times a day.

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