

# Pregnancy Attitude Affects Outcome

## Bedrest requires an "Investment" in your pregnancy

The term bedrest has an all too familiar ring to couples expecting twins or more. Whether your doctor has prescribed bedrest for preventative measures, a particular diagnosis such as first trimester bleeding, or preterm labor contractions, bedrest is a common tool used with expectant mother's of multiples. Lying down horizontally is the only position in which the effects of gravity has little influence on the cervix.

In order to be compliant with your doctor's prescription for bedrest, it requires quite an "investment" in your pregnancy. If you have other children in the home to care for, it may mean hiring someone for some extra help, or soliciting the help of neighbors, other family members, or members of your congregation if you belong to a particular church. It definitely can add extra stress on you and your family. Good communication between you and your partner are essential during this time.

### Resources

- Twin s/Multiples Clubs
- Doulas
- Support Groups
- Multiple Birth Educational Classes

There are community resources to ease into the transition of bedrest until the babies are born. Most cities have twin and/or supertwin (meaning triplets or more) clubs that can help you with meals, babysitting resources, and emotional/psychological support from another member of the group that has experienced what you are now experiencing and can be of infinite benefit. Doulas are another resource that may be available to you in your community, providing help in babysitting, meals, errands, and house cleaning, but some may be costly. Sidelines, a non profit support group can also be very helpful by facilitating your talking with those that have experienced bedrest and can offer suggestions. Find out if there is multiple birth education in your area.

This education is vastly different than a general lamaze class for a pregnancy with singletons. Call your local hospitals, you may need to call more than one, or talk with your physician to see what educational resources are available in your area. The information given in these classes could change the outcome of your pregnancy, and help to provide you with much needed information on your new life with multiples.

There are some sanity suggestions that I recommend from personal experience, having been on complete bedrest for the last twelve weeks of my twin pregnancy.

- **Keep a calendar** - with squares of at least 1 1/2 inches in length and/or width. Write down what you did that day, who you talked to on the phone, any visitors, your blood work or lab results, ultrasounds scheduled and the growth of the babies. Your feelings and emotions whether they be upbeat and positive one day or depressed and melancholy the next, writing them down and expressing them can be very therapeutic. At the end of the day, put a diagonal line through the calendar square. This brings the abstract of *knowing* your "baby building" each day and doing the right thing by being on bedrest to something tangible and concrete you can see. You will be amazed at how much faster the time will go by, and several years down the road you will have a treasured journal that you can look back on, and relive a very special time in your life and the lives of your babies.
- **Make a schedule** - of everything you are going to do that day, no matter how minuscule the items seem to you. Write down what time you are going to shower (if allowed), eat breakfast, lunch and

dinner, make phone calls, write letters, your doctor appointment, or anything else you can think of. At the end of the day cross off each of the items on the list. This idea may seem trivial but will give you a great sense of accomplishment and feeling of self worth and competence. It is not the quantity or even the quality of things that are accomplished, but that you are indeed accomplishing something. After all, bedrest is much a state of mind and attitude.

- **Listen to music -**

Whether at home or in the hospital, get a cassette or CD player and put on some soothing, relaxing music, i.e. Christmas tapes that are instrumental, or easy listening, symphony, or whatever you like. No rocking out please! The idea is that you create your own personal environment. If you're in the hospital long term, you may even hang a few pictures. You can reduce the amount of uterine contractions if you are relaxed and at ease. While in the hospital, you have little control over who comes into your room, or when, but you do have control over what the environment will be like and look like. Make it to your taste and comfort level. I started listening to beautiful instrumental Christmas music in August! I would listen to it many times throughout the day and always at night, which would be soothing and relaxing enough to help me fall asleep.

Exercise is very important while on bedrest. It is important that you keep good muscle tone in your arms and legs and good blood flow to help prevent muscle weakness or numbing. Calcium loss from bones is another potential hazard from a prolonged lack of weight bearing. Ideally, on your frequent trips to the bathroom, wearing ankle weights will help prevent such a weakness in your leg muscles. You may also sit on the side of the bed and straighten one knee then the other, doing repetitions of five to ten. You can do a variety of free movements with your limbs. Extend your foot forward and back, stretch your arms over your head, try to clasp your hands behind your back, and circle your shoulders. You can do these and other exercises as long as they feel good to you, and don't cause uterine contractions. It is very important that you focus on breathing properly, without it you could do more harm than good. You must exhale after each movement. Exhaling will prevent an increase in abdominal pressure. If your bedrest is confined to a hospital setting, always ask for a visit from physical therapy. This type of therapy will be excellent for muscle toning and blood circulation and will help with many of the problems associated with immobility. Check your insurance policy to see whether you can get physical therapy covered at home.

Whether at home or in the hospital, a therapeutic massage from a licensed massage therapist who has experience with pregnant women does wonders for relaxation. This may help lessen uterine contractions and promote better blood circulation which may also help prevent numbing areas on your hips and buttocks. Lastly, swimming is one of the best exercises of all. Swimming gently in a pool maintains mobility and has been found to be more beneficial than bedrest in treating edema in pregnancy, research indicated in a 1990 study by Katz et al. in Obstetrics and Gynecology.



I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it, says Charles Swindall. And so it is with preterm labor, bedrest and other situations to which you may find yourself during a pregnancy with multiples. Since the mind and body are one, they are intimately connected, one affects the other. Your attitude and how you perceive your situation determines whether it is a challenge or a problem. A challenge that you have decided you can get through happily, knowing that being pregnant with multiples places you in a special class of people. An attitude that you are blessed to be in a select group and are surely not alone in your situation, versus one of drudgery, hating every minute of it.

Studies have indicated that a failure to build a positive emotional relationship with your babies during pregnancy could predispose you to develop preterm labor. They also show that psychological factors could play a role in labor onset, pregnancy complications, and ultimately the bonding process.>1 Don't look at bedrest as confinement, but look upon it as an opportunity. Take the opportunity to find new and creative ways of dealing with this very temporary condition of bedrest. It will change your life. I will never again take for granted opening the window and the smell of fresh air, of a warm breeze blowing, walking through fallen leaves, or just having the opportunity of getting out of bed each morning! Attitude is more important than the circumstances in which we find ourselves. We have a choice everyday to determine what our attitude will be for that day, we're in control.