

How to Survive *and Thrive* on Hospital Bedrest

by Crystal Duffy

After being placed on hospital bedrest for five weeks while I was pregnant with my identical twin girls, I've developed several tips on how to survive and thrive through inpatient hospital stays and other trying times.

1. CLARIFICATION—Make sure you check with your doctor on the specific kind of bedrest that applies to you—from mild to no-movement-whatsoever. Modified bedrests restrict women from doing any kind of exercise, or heavy lifting. It can also prohibit sexual intercourse. Other options, include remaining in bed, but getting up to shower and sitting up for meals. The strictest kind of bedrest involves remaining in hospital bed—and using a bed pan. Make sure you know which applies for you.

2. DECORATE AND DOMESTICATE — When I found out I was moving into the hospital for constant monitoring I created a list of all the items I would need to help me feel more comfortable. This included pictures of my family and friends, Dvds, books, and lots of music. I also created a countdown calendar on poster board so I could cross off each day as it ended—one of my favorite tasks. I brought my pillow and blankets from home, a shower chair and my living room lamp (yes I actually took the lamp from our house). The lamp provided me with soft calming light in the mornings and evenings and a break from the bright fluorescent lights of the hospital room. My motto: Bring along whatever makes you happy.

3. STICK TO A SCHEDULE—To break up the long monotonous days of resting you need to act like your imposed isolation is a real job. And it is—you are incubating life! My schedule usually looked something like this:

- 7am—Wake up, the nurse would usually come around and check my vitals and then I would order breakfast. During this early morning time I would usually read and have quiet prayer time.
- 8am—Eat breakfast and watch a morning news show and check email and social media.
- 9am—Get up and shower, get dressed. I even put on make up each day. I have always had the mantra that if you look put together—you feel great and in turn you will be productive and accomplish many things.
- 10am-12 noon—This would be the time I would try to be productive. Whether I set up a baby registry online, created photo books, wrote in my journal, my goal was to end up with a finished product.
- 12 noon—Take a break for lunch, and either make a phone call to my daughter at home with her grandparents, my husband and other close friends.
- 1pm-4pm—In the afternoons I would always try and schedule a visitor to come and hang out with me for a bit. The social interaction was a good distraction.
- 4pm-6:30pm—Read. I tried to identify several books that I wanted to complete before the hospital stay was over and it was a nice sense of accomplishment to finish each book.
- 6:30pm-7:30pm—Eat dinner and get ready for bed. Then cross off that day on my countdown calendar. (A ritual that I looked forward to each night).
- 7:30pm-9:30pm—Watch TV. I tried to limit my TV time during the day, so that it would be a nice change of pace before bed. I also tried to get to bed reasonably early because I was woken up several times each night for monitoring and needed to get as much rest as I could.

4. CATCH UP—Try to fill your time with these important tasks that you most likely won't have time to concentrate on after your baby is born:

- Choose your baby name!
- Choose a Pediatrician for your child
- Detail a birth plan
- Start a Blog or Journal detailing your pregnancy and in particular your time inpatient in the hospital.
- Read for fun! Newspapers, magazines, classic novels, fiction, poetry.
- Binge watch Netflix shows and borrowed DVDs. I packed the entire series of *Sex and the City*.

5. VISITORS—Create a calendar where you map out your friends and family visitors. Sometimes people would message me wanting to come the same day at the same time, so keep your days organized so you can spread the love out.

6. BECOME A PARENTING EXPERT—Take the time to read some parenting books and websites that may help answer your questions regarding your child's health. I read books about Preemies from cover to cover since I knew my little ones would be born early and I wanted to be familiar with the terms and medical issues that could arise.

7. SEEK ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP—You are not alone. You can search on Facebook for other moms who are also Inpatient in the hospital. You can share stories and you might be able to find someone you can relate to in a similar situation.

8. HAVE YOUR PERSON—It's a rollercoaster of emotions to have a high risk pregnancy that requires hospital bedrest. Make sure you have someone you can confide in during this trying time, whether it's your husband, nurse, or a good friend.