

Sleeping in Pregnancy

Please sleep in any position you find comfortable.
Honest.
Sleep is good.

Patients often ask about advice they have heard never to sleep on their back or to sleep only on their left side. Some books advise training yourself to sleep only on the left side all pregnancy. This is not sound medical advice - it is important that you shift positions during the night while you sleep or you will get sore.

Some people worry that the pregnant uterus will compress the blood vessels returning blood to the heart and cause a decrease in the mother's blood flow out to her body, and the baby. They worry that when sleeping on their back, they are depriving the baby of oxygen. This can be very frightening. Please ignore this advice. It is not possible to interfere with circulation to the baby without interfering with circulation to yourself. If you feel comfortable, you and baby are fine. If you feel discomfort or faintness, you will shift in your sleep or you will wake up and change position.

Women often wake in the night and then feel unable to fall sleep again. This is normal. You can relax or meditate. You can get up and read or do a couple of things and then lie down and try to sleep again. If you are uncomfortable, some women find that more pillows and a softer mattress pad may help.

We will let Doctors Dan Farine, MD, FRCSC, P. and Gareth Seaward, MD, FRCSC, as published in the Journal of Obstetric and Gynecology of Canada have the last word on this topic:

"In conclusion, advising women to sleep or lie exclusively on the left side is not practical and is irrelevant to the vast majority of patients. Instead, women should be told that a small minority of pregnant women feel faint when lying flat. Women can easily determine whether lying flat has this effect on them, and most will adopt a comfortable position that is likely to be a left supine position or variant thereof. Since healthy pregnant women often require more pillows than non-pregnant cardiac patients, and since finding a comfortable position in bed in late pregnancy is not easy, physicians should refrain from providing impractical advice"

http://www.sogc.org/jogc/abstracts/full/200710_Commentary_1.pdf