

When Fall Hits, Don't Let the End of Daylight Saving Set You Back



"Falling back" on our clocks can cause some to feel the dread of winter approaching. While some people see the end of daylight saving as the coming of a new season, many struggle with this change and the shortening of daylight hours.

Bedtime rituals for a good night's sleep

It may be hard to stick to a bedtime schedule. But if you can, your body and mind will thank you. A healthy bedtime sleep schedule and routine can make a huge difference in your quality of life. According to the National Sleep

Foundation, it's important to create good sleep habits (sleep hygiene) and follow your routine consistently. The following tips can help you transition during daylight saving and sleep healthy year-round.

- Avoid alcohol and electronics at night.
- Create a relaxing routine at night, whether it's turning the TV off 30 minutes before bedtime or eliminating exercise two hours before bedtime.
- Eliminate bedroom noise that can interrupt sleep.
- Keep your bedroom temperature at 60 to 67 degrees.
- Keep your bedtime and wake-up time regular.
- Use bright light to help manage your circadian rhythms.

Preparing your kids

For those without kids, the end of daylight saving time may mean an extra hour of sleep on Sunday morning. But if you have children, especially young ones, they probably won't get the memo about the time shift. Here are some tips on preparing your kids for the end of daylight saving.

Adjust their sleep schedule gradually

Use the week leading up to the clock change to gradually shift your kids' bedtime later by 10 to 15 minutes each day. That way, when the day of the time change arrives, they won't be as affected by staying up a full hour later.

Anticipate early rising

Adjusting to a time change takes time, especially for kids. Be prepared for your children to wake up early during the first week or so after you turn the clocks back. However, try to encourage them to stay in their rooms, have some quiet time or play independently until their new "normal" waking time. If your children are old enough, consider using an "OK to wake" clock that displays a green light when it's time to get up for the day and leave their room.

Consider changes in dark and light

Make sure that your child's room is as dark as possible at bedtime. You can hang blackout curtains to help create a dark environment. Also ensure that your child has plenty of exposure to natural light during the day. This helps regulate the body's natural rhythms.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

It's natural to feel a bit less energetic when there are fewer hours of daylight during the fall and winter months. However, some people suffer from a form of depression related to the change in seasons. This condition is known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. For people with SAD, the end of daylight saving time can be a worrisome time that signals the beginning of their seasonal-related depression.

Approximately 10 million Americans are affected by seasonal affective disorder, and another 10% to 20% experience mild SAD symptoms. Watch for the following symptoms and talk to your health care provider if you experience any of

these.

- Changes in appetite or weight
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feelings of agitation or moodiness
- Feelings of depression
- Loss of interest in activities you once liked
- Lack of energy to get through daily activities
- Oversleeping

Light therapy for SAD

One of the most common treatments for SAD is light therapy, also known as phototherapy. This at-home treatment allows you to sit a few feet from a specialized light box for a period of time soon after you wake up each morning. Phototherapy mimics the effects of natural light and has been shown to cause a change in brain chemicals that can boost mood.

Even if you haven't been diagnosed with SAD, phototherapy may help you cope with a mild case of the "winter blues," especially soon after the end of daylight saving.

Resetting your 24-hour natural cycle takes some time. Even though you'll gain an hour of sleep in the fall and lose an hour of sleep in the spring, you can help yourself and your loved ones adapt to the new time change by creating positive sleep environments. Don't forget to eliminate caffeine and exercise a few hours before bedtime and create bedtime rituals that promote restful sleep.

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