

For Your Health:

Restoring Your Sleep After Daylight Saving Time

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Are you getting enough sleep? If you are like most Americans, probably not. Last year, for the first time since 2001, a Gallup Poll found that more than half of Americans say they need more sleep. And with Daylight Saving Time this month, that lack of sleep can be even more draining. When the hours shift, we can often feel it in our sleep patterns for days, and sometimes weeks, on end. Although resting might not always feel productive, it is one of the best things we can do for our health.

According to the Center for Disease Control (the CDC) getting enough sleep has a number of health benefits. For instance, enough sleep can help you get sick less often, stay at a healthy weight, reduce stress, and improve your mood. Enough sleep can also improve your heart health and metabolism, lower your risk of chronic conditions like Type 2 diabetes and stroke, lessen the risk of motor vehicle crashes and related injury or death, and improve your attention and memory to better perform daily activities. There is almost nothing in our health that can't be improved by getting a good night's sleep!

But how much sleep is enough sleep? Although our need for sleep changes throughout our lives, all adults should be trying for at least 7 hours of sleep each night. If you are struggling to get enough hours, try getting up and going to bed at the same time each day - yes, even on weekends. When you hear about circadian rhythms this is it — the natural cycle that tells your body when to wake up and when to wind down. The more you stick to the same wake-up time and bedtime, the more naturally your body will fall into a healthy sleep pattern.

Preparing for sleep with a calming nighttime routine can be helpful for falling asleep, but make sure that routine doesn't include screens at least 30 minutes before bed. While staying connected with loved ones is meaningful, the bright lights and stimulating colors from our phones, computers, and TVs can keep our minds active without us even realizing it—making it harder to unwind and fall asleep.

Maybe you had a good sleep pattern before, but now that Daylight Saving Time has happened, you have fallen off track. According to the New York Times article "Don't Let Daylight Saving Time Ruin Your Sleep", the best ways to adjust back are to:

- Gradually adjust your sleep and mealtimes – Shift your wake-up time and meals by 15-minute increments to help your body ease into the new schedule. This gradual approach allows your internal clock to catch up without feeling too disruptive.
- Soak up the morning light– Natural light signals to your body that it's time to wake up. Open your blinds as soon as you get up or take a short walk outside to help regulate your circadian rhythm.
- Take care with caffeine and alcohol – Both caffeine and alcohol can disrupt sleep, even under normal circumstances. Try not to rely on them as a quick fix while adjusting to the time change.
- Plan for nourishing meals– A tired body is often a hungry body. Eating satisfying, nutrient-rich meals can help you maintain steady energy levels throughout the day.

Even though we experience Daylight Saving Time every year, it can affect us differently each time. Last year, you may have barely noticed the shift, while this year, you're still struggling to wake up two weeks later. This is normal and the more you prioritize your sleep and build healthy patterns, the sooner you will be feeling back to your normal self.

The Healthcare Consortium is a non-profit organization with a mission of improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the residents in our rural community. The agency is located at 325 Columbia St. in Hudson. For more information: visit www.columbiahealthnet.org or call 518-822-8820.