Adjusting Your Schedule to the Changing Daylight Hours

You've heard of daylight savings before, but do you really know what it is? Every spring, we jump ahead an hour to help us make the most out of daylight during the summer. Once fall hits, we "spring back" an hour, as days start to shorten.

"What's the point of daylight savings," you ask? Simply put, daylight savings aims to give people an extra hour of sunlight, regardless of the season. And while many people can't wait to have more time in the sun, it can be difficult to adjust to the change.

In fact, many people struggle through their day-to-day routine at the start of daylight savings. But don't worry; there are adjustments you can make to help. From prioritizing sleep to having a consistent schedule, here's what you need to know:

1. Go to Bed Earlier

During daylight savings, the clock might say 7:00 a.m., but to your body, it will feel like 6:00 a.m. As you probably know, an hour of sleep can make a big difference in your productivity.

To combat this change, consider starting your nighttime routine at least an hour earlier. Whether your routine includes putting your kids to sleep or taking a hot bath, move up your timeline. Doing so means you'll be able to go to sleep earlier, so you can avoid feeling drowsy in the morning.

If possible, start easing yourself into this new schedule a few days before daylight savings so your body has time to

adjust. The earlier you start, the easier it’ll be in the long run.

2. Adjust Your Schedule

One of the benefits of daylight savings is that evenings last longer. Rather than it getting dark around 5:00 p.m., the sun typically shines until around 7:00 p.m. (depending on where you live). This means you have more time to do things you enjoy after work. Whether that’s going for a walk outside or grabbing a bite to eat with friends, it can feel like you have more hours in the day.

In addition to being able to do more, daylight savings also brings health benefits with its increased sunlight. If you didn’t know, sunlight can greatly improve your health and well-being. It can help kill bacteria, regulate your immune system, and even boost your mood.

In fact, according to research, not getting enough sunlight can result in lower serotonin levels, which can lead to depression. This explains why many people feel down during the fall/winter months. Less sun equals less serotonin.

3. Eat a Nutritious Breakfast

Chances are you’ve heard the saying, “Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.” Well, it’s true. Your morning meal can have a serious impact on your day and overall energy levels.

In fact, research has found that regularly skipping breakfast can wreak havoc on your health. For one, it can impact your lipid metabolism, causing weight gain. Skipping breakfast can also lead to heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and more.

It’s important to fill your body with nutrition, especially as

you adjust to daylight savings time. If you don’t, you may experience fatigue and drowsiness. To combat that, ensure you kick off your day with a healthy and balanced meal. For example, eggs, yogurt, and oatmeal. All three contain nutrients, like fiber and protein, to help you stay full longer and promote healthy gut bacteria.

4. Exercise

The last thing you probably want to do when you’re tired is exercise. It may be one of the best things you can do. Working out offers many benefits that can help you adjust to the time change. For instance, exercise boosts your energy and mood. If daylight savings has you feeling drowsy and sluggish, a quick workout may be the cure.

Exercise also supports good sleep. In fact, even moderate exercise can help people fall asleep quicker and stay asleep longer. Additionally, exercise can help combat daytime sleepiness so you don’t feel the need to nap during the afternoon.

It’s important to note; you don’t need to complete high-intensity workouts to experience these benefits. Walking, swimming, and even simple movement like yoga are enough to help you adjust to the changing daylight hours.

5. Avoid Naps

During daylight savings, you may think it’s a good idea to take a few minutes of rest in the afternoon. After all, you’re exhausted and want to ensure you have enough energy to finish the day. That’s understandable, but napping can do more harm than good.

For some, taking an afternoon nap can make falling asleep later that night difficult. Napping can also lead to sleep

inertia (feeling groggy or disoriented after a nap). While not everyone experiences this, some do, and it can make it difficult to adjust to the time change.

Rather than taking extended naps in the afternoon, consider adjusting your bedtime to help regulate your hormones. Going to bed earlier can help combat fatigue without dysregulating your circadian rhythm, making you feel well-rested.

6. Be Consistent

Consistency is key when it comes to adjusting your schedule. The more you stay true to your new routine, the easier it'll be. So, do your best to wake up and sleep simultaneously every morning — even on weekends.

We know sleeping in late now and then may be tempting, but even the smallest change can ruin your progress. Not to mention, keeping a consistent sleep schedule is a great way to improve your sleep while also helping you feel well-rested when you wake up.

Additionally, make sure you eat breakfast and dinner around the same time every day. You should also try to keep a consistent workout regimen. Following a routine may seem obnoxious, but it's one of the best things you can do to ensure you're adjusting to the time change. Routines can also help reduce stress so that you can feel more calm and relaxed.

7. Start Preparing Early

Raise your hand if you've ever forgotten to change your clocks, only to wake up in a panic the morning of daylight savings time. Is your hand raised? You're not alone. For many, daylight savings seems to creep up out of nowhere. And while you may think it's better to jump right into the change, preparation is important.

So, make sure you move all your clocks an hour ahead the night before daylight savings starts. Doing so will help you avoid any confusion in the morning. Instead, you'll be ready for the day, knowing that you now have an extra hour in the evening to do something fun.

In addition to preparing yourself, make sure your family is ready too. If you have young children, explain daylight savings time to them. Make sure they know what it means and the benefits it brings. Brainstorm ways they can make the most out of this time, like hanging out with their friends longer after school. Or maybe they can join an after-school sports club now that it stays lighter longer.

Daylight savings can be an adjustment, but it doesn't have to make your life harder. With a little prep and the tips above, you can spring forward stress-free. Just remember, daylight savings is meant to help you – not hurt. So, follow a nutritious diet, go to sleep earlier, exercise, and enjoy the extra sunlight!

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