



www.heraldextra.com

When you go to bed Saturday night you will face the twice-a-year ritual of adjusting your clocks for Daylight Saving Time.

Adjusting your clock radio, wall clocks, microwave and stove may be relatively easy after practicing for a number of years. For most, the time change on the VCR is a thing of the past, but you may not remember to change the time on your programmable thermostat. Your cell phone, computer or tablet will probably automatically adjust.

But what about your body?

In the spring it's particularly difficult, as most of us lose an hour of sleep. Those who forget to change their clocks or sleep through their alarms might get away without problems, at least initially.

There are ways for the rest of us, however, to minimize the effects of losing that precious 60 minutes of sleep without missing a church meeting -- or showing up, then sleeping through it. It won't work to go to bed an hour earlier, as you probably won't be able to fall into your regular sleep pattern, but instead toss and turn waiting for your normal bedtime.

"Fitness and nutrition can play a key role in how our bodies adjust to the time change," said Franci Cohen, a New York City exercise physiologist and certified nutritionist.

Fitness

"Fitness has a more positive connotation than exercise, but there is a definite relationship," Cohen said. "Whatever you call it, it releases serotonin, a chemical in the brain that is sometimes attributed to creating a feeling of well-being and happiness.

"Exercise regularly, preferably outdoors, and early in the day. A brisk morning walk is perfect."

Exercising in the evening could make it harder to get to sleep or affect the quality of your sleep.

One of the reasons for spending time outdoors is to expose the body to vitamin D, which increases immunity and well-being.

"Too many people are deficient in vitamin D," said Dr. Joseph Miner, director of the Utah County Health Department. Vitamin D can be found through exposure to sunshine, but for many years people have been using sunscreen to avoid burning.

Miner also recommended exercise, with some limits.

"To combat fatigue, you can exercise," he said. "Moderate or light exercise helps you sleep better, but don't do it too close to bedtime."

With more daylight in the evening, there may be a temptation to remain at your job longer. Psychologically, you may be used to heading for home when the skies begin to darken.

However, keep to your regular quitting time and use that extra daylight to squeeze in a workout. You could walk home from work, if the weather permits and your home is close enough. If not, take a short walk from your home when you arrive.

In the spring, lawn care, soccer games and other social events can take place on weekends. Those commitments can sneak up on people, so be aware. They can easily take the place of workout times. Instead, take advantage of more light on weeknights and exercise then.

Nutrition

There are some foods to avoid, some to eat with the right timing, and some things to be sure to eat.

Spicy foods or others that may contribute to heartburn should be avoided, particularly in the evening hours. Caffeine should also be on the same schedule.

“Going easy on caffeine, avoiding heavy or spicy foods in the evening, and limiting alcohol are all tips that we teach for better sleep,” said Mindy Probst, outpatient dietitian at Utah Valley Regional Medical Center. “Sleep is a very important part of good health all year long.”

Changing the time could prompt people to grab a few extra minutes of sleep by skipping breakfast. In a word -- don't.

Probst said that meal is important.

“People often do skip breakfast with the rationale that they don't feel hungry or they are too rushed in the morning,” she said. “Making time for breakfast will provide the energy we all need to get through the morning.

"Oatmeal with cinnamon and raisins, low-fat yogurt with toast, or a boiled egg with an orange and a glass of low-fat milk are all good options to get your morning off to a good energized start.”

“Skipping it will make you feel even more fatigued, potentially causing you to overdo it on caffeine and sugary foods,” Cohen said. “This can set you up for a major energy crash later in the day.”

To save time, fruit and veggie smoothies can make an energizing breakfast. Avocados contain potassium, which has been shown to help regulate blood pressure and provide energy. Oatmeal, plain yogurt and apples are also among her recommendations for breakfast.

Before the time change actually takes place, do what you can to eat dinner an hour earlier than you are accustomed to, with the goal of helping your body more readily make the adjustment.

Even with the right nutrition, there is often a need for a snack to boost energy.

If you find yourself in an afternoon slump, a healthy snack might help pick you up.

“A snack that is high in fiber and includes a little protein will give you lasting energy to power through the afternoon,” Probst said. “A slice of whole grain toast with a thin spread of peanut butter, an apple and a low-fat cheese stick, or a carton of low-fat yogurt with some low-fat granola are all great options.

"Try to limit your snack to 200 calories or less to maintain a healthy calorie balance throughout the day."

The transition to the new time should be completed within seven days.

"After a week of springing forward, if you're still fighting fatigue, it's best to speak to a professional," Cohen said. "Consult your doctor about taking melatonin or other natural sleep aids.

"Although experts don't agree on how long it takes for the body to fully adjust, most agree that addressing the issue sooner than later is a good idea.

"Daylight saving time may exacerbate adrenal fatigue and increase stress hormones such as cortisol in the body. A health professional can provide you with tools and techniques to help you combat problems before they worsen."