

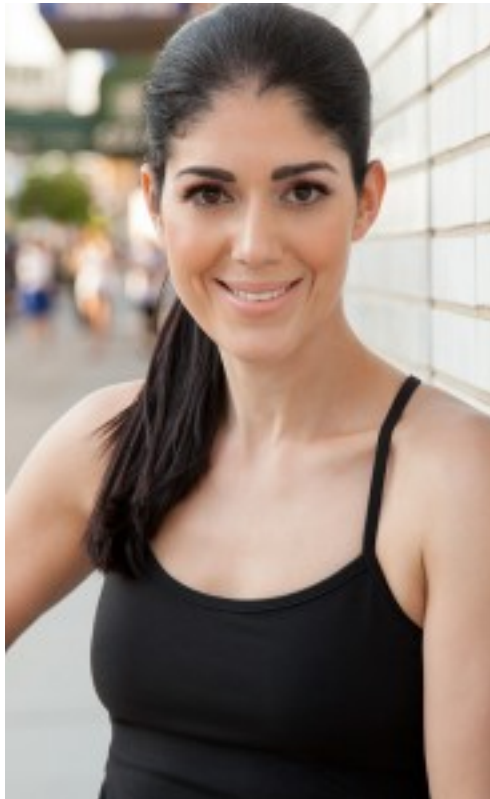


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Spring Ahead to Healthy

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Franci Cohen

On Sunday March 8, the clocks 'Spring forward' to Daylight Savings Time. Even though your brain knows that the time on the clock has changed, your body's internal clock does not. In the fall, when you've gained an hour of sleep, you might not feel tired, but you may get cranky when you have to wait an extra hour before your lunch break. When the clocks move forward in the spring, you'll be robbed of an hour's sleep. That night, you may not be able to fall into your normal sleep rhythms an hour earlier than you're used to, and you won't get as much quality sleep as you need. **"Fitness and nutrition can play a key role in how are bodies adjust to the time change."** says Franci Cohen, a New York City exercise physiologist and certified nutritionist.

Here she offers fitness and nutrition tips to spring forward with ease:

Franci explains that, **"Working out releases serotonin**, a chemical in the brain that helps our bodies adjust. Exercise regularly, preferably outdoors, and early in the day. A brisk morning walk is perfect.

Avoid exercising too late in the evening though, as this could interfere with the quality of your sleep. It's especially beneficial to engage in physical activity outdoors during the day, which helps increase levels of Vitamin D. Since Vitamin D is manufactured beneath the skin, when the body is exposed to sunlight, exercising outdoors can increase your body's levels of Vitamin D, which contribute to greater overall immunity and well-being."

Go easy on the caffeine. A cup of coffee or two in the morning is fine, but consuming too much caffeine later in the day may disrupt your sleep.

Move dinner time up by an hour before the time change to help your body adjust quicker.

Breakfast Time: Too tired to eat breakfast? "Skipping it will make you feel even more fatigued, potentially causing you to overdo it on caffeine and sugary foods. This can set you up for a major energy-crash later in the day," says Franci. Oatmeal, plain yogurt, and apples are great energy-boosting foods to eat for breakfast. Fruit and veggie smoothies are another easy option for an energizing breakfast. Avocados are another great source of energy and contain potassium, a nutrient that has been shown to help regulate blood pressure.

Snack Time: Need an energy-boosting snack? Ditch the donuts and munch on some almonds. They are perfect to help us stay energized due to the fact that they are loaded with potassium and iron. Franci suggests that, "to obtain all their health benefits, be sure to snack on raw almonds rather than the candy-coated or salted kind." Don't like nuts? Other great energy-boosting snacks include grapes, peaches and sunflower seeds.

Avoid heavy foods or spicy foods, especially at night. Or any foods you know that may cause heartburn, making it difficult for you to sleep.

Don't drink too much alcohol. Over-consumption of your favorite adult beverages may cause a very restless uncomfortable night.

Eat cherries. Not only are they rich in vitamins, cherries contain melatonin, a substance also found in the human body that helps regulate sleep. Eating fresh or dried cherries before you go to bed at night may help you sleep better.

Here are a few tips on how to add a little variety to your workout routine now that the days are a little longer:

Stick to your quitting time. If you usually leave work around 5:30, try to stick to that plan even now that it's light out until 7:00pm. Don't simply stretch your workday out. Use that daylight to squeeze in a workout.

Walk your commute. If it's an option, skip one workout at the gym a week and walk home from work during the newfound daylight instead.

Be flexible. If you typically workout on the weekend and you find that your spring social calendar is interfering with your weekend workouts, take advantage of the longer weeknights to get all your exercise in before the weekend.

After a week of springing forward, if you're still fighting fatigue, it's best to speak to a professional. 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 savings time may exacerbate adrenal fatigue and increase stress hormones in the body such as cortisol. A health professional can provide you with tools and techniques to help you combat problems before they worsen.

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Franci Cohen is a personal trainer, exercise physiologist, and certified nutritionist with a double master's degree in nutrition and exercise physiology. She is the CEO of Fuel Fitness NY, and the creator of SPIDERBANDS®. Centered around suspension and aerial concepts, this unique hybrid fitness modality is a total-body cardio resistance workout that leverages gravity and your bodyweight with other intense exercise modules such as rebounding, kickboxing and indoor cycling. With over 18 years of experience, Franci has been a mainstay in the fitness and nutrition industries. Franci believes in a tough love approach to fitness and health. "We all have our fitness wake-up call at some point in our lives and it can be a powerful catalyst for change," says Franci. "Unfortunately, many people overcompensate and try to change everything at once, which is a disaster. Making lasting change involves going through stages that aren't necessarily linear. People fluctuate and transition between the stages. Knowing how to move through them can get you where you want to be."