



## Ready to "Spring Forward?" How to Do It The Healthy Way

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This Sunday, 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, and you won't get as much quality sleep as you need. But you can work on adjusting to these changes. “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 nutrition and fitness tips to spring forward with ease:

**Exercise regularly, preferably outdoors, and early in the day.** A brisk morning walk is perfect. Avoid exercising too late in the evening, because that could interfere with the quality of your sleep. It's especially beneficial to engage in physical activity outdoors during the day so you can increase levels of Vitamin D.

**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.

**Eat an energizing breakfast.** Even if you're too tired to eat, Cohen says, “skipping it will make you feel 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.” She recommends oatmeal, plain yogurt, and apples. Fruit and veggie smoothies are also good.

**Avoid sugary snack times.** Ditch the donuts and munch on some almonds. They are perfect to help us stay energized because they're loaded with potassium and iron. “To obtain all their health benefits, “ Cohen says, “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.

**Move dinner time up by an hour before the time change.** Your body will adjust more quickly.

**Avoid heavy foods or spicy foods, especially at night.** Additionally, steer clear of other foods that can cause heartburn, which may make it difficult to sleep.

**Don't drink too much alcohol.** Over-consumption 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.

**At work, stick to your quitting time.** If you usually leave work around 5:30, try to keep to that scheduled even though it stays light later. 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 new found daylight.

**Be flexible.** If you typically work out 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.

*Franci Cohen, the CEO of Fuel Fitness NY, is a personal trainer, exercise physiologist, and certified nutritionist with a double master's degree in nutrition and exercise physiology. For more on her work, visit [www.francicohen.com](http://www.francicohen.com)*