

Wait, What Time is it? It's Daylight Saving Time - Again

[Daylight Saving Time](#) runs from March until November, allowing for longer days and shorter nights.

The healthy habits that help you adjust to the time change are the same ones you should follow throughout the year. "It's not so much about losing or gaining an hour of sleep, as it is an opportunity to remind people how important it is to maintain healthy behaviors all year long," says [Dr. Alexandre Abreu](#). A pulmonologist and sleep specialist, Dr. Abreu is director of the [UHealth Sleep Center](#), part of the University of Miami Health System.

Dr. Abreu says that, to make a smooth transition:

Routine is everything

Generally, a one hour time change requires one day of adjustment. The transition is easier if you are a creature of habit. "Maintain your normal routine, including dinner and sleep schedules. Upon waking, open the curtains, eat a healthy breakfast and get exposed to bright light. Bright light is the main regulator of circadian rhythms that help reset your internal clock," explains Dr. Abreu. Even if you feel sluggish or a bit tired at first, stick to a schedule, regardless of how early the sun rises or sets.

If tempted to nap during the day, follow Dr. Abreu's guidelines. "If you have trouble falling or staying asleep at night, don't nap. Otherwise, a short 30 to 60-minute nap in the early afternoon is fine."

Healthy sleep hygiene

When it comes to getting a good night's sleep, the same rules apply, regardless of the time change:

- Stay active throughout the day, getting outdoor exercise when possible.
- Get exposure to bright light or sunshine during the day.
- Maintain regular waking and bedtimes.
- Reduce caffeine consumption, especially after lunchtime.
- Limit alcohol consumption and don't drink alcohol close to bedtime.
- Allow time to wind down before bed, with calming activities like reading, watching a movie or spending time with family and pets.

Sleep stealers

Screen time - in front of computers, iPads or cell phones - is a major sleep disruptor. "The intense brightness and close proximity to your eyes affects sleep. Avoid using electronic devices three to four hours before bedtime. If you must use your computer or cell phone at night, decrease the brightness as much as you can and try to keep it away from your face. If you have to work on a computer, use a smaller screen to minimize the effect of the light," says Dr. Abreu. Televisions do not pose as much of a problem. The light they generate is not as bright and we generally sit farther from the screen.

Parental sleep advisory

Because children need nine to ten hours of sleep, Dr. Abreu advises parents, "Treat the child as a child. Enforce a sleep schedule so they are well rested in the morning." Whining aside, children need to wind down before bedtime. Remove the electronics and transition to quieter activities.

Although we know better, adults are just as likely as kids to push the boundaries of a

healthy bedtime. “Human beings want an easy solution, like a pill, to help them sleep. Most of the time, the solution is within ourselves. It’s about realizing what we are doing wrong and how we can have a healthier lifestyle. That’s the key message,” says Dr. Abreu.

Written by Natasha Bright, contributing writer for UMiami Health News.