

Spring forward with 10 sleep tips

March 6 2013, by Carolyn Pennington

Daylight savings time is March 10 – that's when clocks "spring forward" at 2 a.m. and you lose an hour of sleep. Most Americans are already sleep-deprived, which can impact your mood and performance in the workplace and overall health.

Ear, nose and throat specialist at the UConn Health Center, Dr. Kourosh Parham, says [sleep problems](#) can be caused by various factors.

- Physical (for example, ulcers)
- Medical (for example, asthma)
- Psychiatric (for example, depression and [anxiety disorders](#))
- Environmental (for example, alcohol use)

Tips for a better night's sleep:

1. **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. Sleeping later on weekends won't fully make up for a [lack of sleep](#) during the week and will make it harder to wake up early on Monday morning.

2. **Avoid caffeine and nicotine.** Coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate contain the stimulant caffeine, and its effects can take as long as eight hours to wear off fully. Nicotine is also a stimulant, often causing smokers to sleep only very lightly. In addition, smokers often wake up too early in the morning because of [nicotine withdrawal](#).

3. **Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.** Having a "nightcap" before sleep may help you relax, but heavy use robs you of [deep sleep](#) and REM sleep, keeping you in the lighter stages of sleep. You also tend to wake up in the middle of the night when the effects of the alcohol have worn off.

4. **Avoid large meals and beverages late at night.** A large meal can cause indigestion that interferes with sleep. Drinking too many fluids at night can cause frequent awakenings to urinate.

5. **If possible, avoid medicines that delay or disrupt your sleep.** Some commonly prescribed heart, blood pressure, or [asthma medications](#), as well as some over-the-counter and herbal remedies for coughs, colds, or allergies, can disrupt sleep patterns.

6. **Don't take naps after 3 p.m.** Naps can help make up for lost sleep but late afternoon naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night.

7. **Relax before bed.** A relaxing activity, such as reading or listening to music, should be part of your bedtime ritual.

8. **Take a hot bath before bed.** The drop in body temperature after getting out of the bath may help you feel sleepy, and relax and slow you down so you're more ready to sleep.

9. **Have a good sleeping environment.** Get rid of anything in your bedroom that might distract you from sleep, such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or warm temperatures. You sleep better if the temperature in the room is kept on the cool side. A TV, cell phone, or computer in the bedroom can be a distraction and deprive you of needed sleep. Having a comfortable mattress and pillow can help promote a good night's sleep. Individuals who have insomnia often watch the clock. Turn the clock's face out of view so you don't worry about the time

while trying to fall asleep.

10. Have the right sunlight exposure. Daylight is key to regulating daily [sleep patterns](#). Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes each day. If possible, wake up with the sun or use very bright lights in the morning. Sleep experts recommend that, if you have problems falling asleep, you should get an hour of exposure to morning sunlight and turn down the lights before bedtime.

See a health professional if you continue to have trouble sleeping. If you consistently find it difficult to fall or stay asleep and/or feel tired or not well rested during the day despite spending enough time in bed at night, you may have a sleep disorder. Your family health care provider or a sleep specialist should be able to help you, and it is important to rule out other health or emotional problems that may be disturbing your [sleep](#).

Provided by University of Connecticut

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