

Not putting the clocks back this weekend will improve health, says expert

October 29 2010

Mayer Hillman, Senior Fellow Emeritus at the Policy Studies Institute, argues that the effect of doing so would be to increase the number of 'accessible' daylight hours and thus encourage more outdoor activity throughout the year.

A major public health problem contributing to the incidence of [chronic illnesses](#) in the UK is caused by lack of exercise, writes Hillman. Adults are recommended to engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate or [vigorous activity](#) daily and children at least one hour. However, surveys have revealed a trend towards declining fitness and it has been predicted that over half the population will be clinically obese by 2050.

Although most people are aware of the benefits of taking up more [physical activity](#) - a lowered risk of coronary [heart disease](#), obesity, diabetes, hypertension and some cancers - this routine features in few people's everyday lives, and the school curriculum allocates insufficient time for this, he adds.

Research shows that people feel happier, more energetic and have lower sickness rates in the longer and brighter days of summer, whereas their mood tends to decline during the shorter and duller days of winter. Two studies published by the Policy Studies Institute also point to a wide range of advantages of the clock change proposal.

It is surprising therefore that there has been a consistent oversight of the role that increasing the number of 'accessible' daylight hours in this way

could play in the promotion of [physical health](#) and well-being, he says. Taking account of the typical daily patterns of adults and children, the clock change "would considerably increase opportunities for outdoor leisure activities - about 300 additional hours of daylight for adults each year and 200 more for children."

According to Hillman, there is strong public support for the clock change – "about 4 to 1 in England and Wales and fairly evenly divided in Scotland."

Adopting the clock change proposal "is an effective, practical and remarkably easily managed way of achieving a better alignment of our waking hours with the available daylight during the year," he argues. "It must be rare to find a means of vastly improving the health and well-being of nearly everyone in the population – and at no cost. Here we have it. All it requires is a majority of MPs walking through the 'Ayes' lobby in the House of Commons," he concludes.

Provided by British Medical Journal

Citation: Not putting the clocks back this weekend will improve health, says expert (2010, October 29) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-10-clocks-weekend-health-expert.html>

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