

# On March 11, spring forward without losing sleep

March 6 2012, By Katie Wooldridge

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(Medical Xpress) -- The return of daylight saving time and losing an hour of sleep causes most to cringe at the thought. According to Aparajitha Verma, M.D., medical director of the Sleep Disorders Center at the Methodist Neurological Institute in Houston, “springing forward” affects the sleep patterns of more than 70 million Americans. She offers some tips about how to practice good sleep hygiene before March 11 rolls around.

According to Verma, the average person takes three to four days to adjust to the time change, so preparing for the change will allow for better sleep habits. Get up an hour earlier and go to sleep an hour earlier. Take a nap in the afternoon on Sunday if needed, but not within a few hours of bedtime. Napping too close to bedtime can disrupt nighttime sleep.

Disrupted sleep patterns can also lead to more serious health and lifestyle issues. If sleep does not come within 30 minutes of lying down, if there is excessive daytime sleepiness, or if sleeping for seven or more hours is not enough, there might be a more serious sleeping disorder happening. People with these symptoms should consider an overnight sleep study at a center that is accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, such as the sleep center at Methodist.

Good “sleep hygiene” can be simply achieved by following year round tips including:

- Sleep in a quiet and dark environment and set the thermostat at a slightly cooler temperature;
- Don't allow pets in the bed;
- No reading, eating or watching TV in bed;
- Don't watch the clock;
- Set a "wind down" time prior to going to bed;
- Don't take over the counter sleep aids and avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol close to bedtime, as these can disrupt sleep. Instead, try drinking warm teas or milk to increase your body temperature, which helps induce and sustain sleep;
- Exercise is good for sleep, but not within two hours of going to [sleep](#).

Provided by Methodist Hospital System

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