

Daylight saving time's 'spring forward' can cause problems, expert says

March 5 2015

Daylight saving time begins at 2:00 a.m. Sunday—and while you'll only turn the clock ahead one hour, the disruption might be enough to throw you temporarily off kilter.

"For individuals who maintain their regular time of sleep onset, the start of [daylight saving time](#) means loss of one hour of sleep," said Ralph Lydic, the Robert H. Cole Professor of Neuroscience. "It's a good time to remind ourselves that even small changes in the amount of sleep that we obtain can have a significant impact on our daytime performance."

Lydic and his wife and research partner, Helen A. Baghdoyan, are neuroscientists who moved to Knoxville last fall. They now interact with a large network of scientists and clinicians who make up the Neuroscience Network of East Tennessee, also known as NeuroNET, to advance research studies of the brain. Lydic and Baghdoyan's laboratories are based at UT Medical Center, and they hold professorial positions in UT's Department of Psychology and in UT Graduate School of Medicine's Department of Anesthesiology. They also have joint appointments at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Your sleep style—whether you're the evening type, who likes to stay up late or the morning type, who likes to rise early—is a biological trait referred to as "chronotype," Lydic explained.

"For everyone, [adequate sleep](#) is as essential for our well-being, and for our ability to perform, as is adequate nutrition," Lydic said. Like

nutrition, sleep impacts our exercise, cardiovascular health, immune functions, emotional state, learning, and memory.

"But unlike consumption of food, we often deprive ourselves of sleep because sleep is devalued as a disruption of waking activities," Lydic said. "Yet chronic sleep restriction or deprivation, like poor nutrition, is a serious health risk. The single best predictor of daytime performance is the amount and quality of sleep obtained during the previous night."

And even losing an hour can have significant repercussions.

"In a 1996 paper published in the New England Journal of Medicine, Stanley Coren showed that the start of daylight saving time in the spring is associated with an 8 percent increase in traffic accidents," Lydic said. "The impact of this increase in accidents can be appreciated relative to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control indicating that each year drowsy driving is a factor in 7,500 fatal [motor vehicle crashes](#)."

The good news: It won't take too long to readjust your internal clock, provided you maintain some good habits. In general, it takes about a day to adjust for each hour of time change.

Women ages twenty-five to fifty-five typically need 6.5 to 8.5 hours of sleep. Men typically need 6.3 to 8.1 hours of [sleep](#). Here are some everyday tips for getting a good night's rest:

- Have a fixed bedtime and wake-up time.
- Avoid napping during the day.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or caffeine right before bed.
- Avoid eating heavy, spicy, or sugary food before bed.
- Get regular exercise—but not right before bed.
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.
- Avoid using your bedroom as a workroom.

- Turn off electronics thirty to sixty minutes before bedtime.

Provided by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

Citation: Daylight saving time's 'spring forward' can cause problems, expert says (2015, March 5)
retrieved 19 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-03-daylight-problems-expert.html>

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