

# Doctors want daylight saving time abolished. Here's why, and what you can do about it

March 12 2022, by Lisa Gutierrez

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

For years, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, experts on all things sleep, has called for daylight saving time to be abolished.

In the days leading up to this weekend's [time](#) change, their cause was debated in yet another congressional hearing.

But for now, we're stuck with, well, Cranky Monday.

"Basically what is going to happen Monday morning is that you will have jet lag without traveling," said Dr. Abid Bhat, medical director for the University Health Sleep Center, formerly Truman Medical Centers.

We move our clocks ahead an hour at 2 a.m. Sunday. Medical experts oppose this yo-yoing of springing ahead and falling back because it messes with our health in demonstrative ways. The sleep medicine academy says research supports year-round standard time.

The American Heart Association has issued its yearly reminder that incidents of heart disease and stroke go up at daylight saving time—a biological "clock shock" thus far unexplained.

And here's hoping you don't have to be in federal court on Monday. One study found that judges hand out longer sentences on that day compared to other days—the Association for Psychological Science declared "sleepy punishers are harsh punishers."

Some experts even suggest not scheduling anything important next week because you'll be off your game until you get back into your regular sleep pattern.

Changing the clock changes up our body's production of hormones, including melatonin, the night-time hormone that affects sleep; cortisol, the stress hormone; and serotonin, the "feel-good" hormone that helps keep depression and anxiety at bay. Which explains the crankiness.

"To make it simple, our body is aligned with the outside world through a biological clock. So there's a synchrony," said Bhat. "And when you change that there's a misalignment."

And now, because of the pandemic, there's a new group of people suffering a host of sleep problems.

"It is stunning how many people we see in the [sleep clinic](#) who had COVID," said Bhat.

They cover the spectrum, from people who had mild symptoms to those who were hospitalized. They started coming into the sleep center last year, Bhat said, a parade of exhausted people, some in tears because their new sleep problems got in the way of daily life.

"They're very sleepy, tired, exhausted, no energy, what we call sometimes post-COVID fatigue syndrome," said Bhat. "Extreme lethargy—brain fog is a common term people are using. I had a young mom say, 'I can't take care of my young kids.'"

Bhat and his colleagues see hypersomnia, or excessive sleep, among COVID patients. One reported sleeping for 20 hours. On the flip side: people who can't fall asleep at all.

One patient said she never had sleep problems before she had COVID. Now, she can't get to sleep at night. "She was in tears," said Bhat. "She has tried all the medications. She has been prescribed sleeping pills. Nothing is working."

They've also seen COVID patients with restless leg syndrome, "where people have this urge to move their legs when they're trying to sleep," said Bhat. It "can be very frustrating to the person and to the bed partner.

"Interestingly, some of these patients do (start feeling) better. And that's one of those rare hopes here that it might go away on its own at times."

For anyone chasing that good night's sleep, Bhat says: Stick with the

basics.

"One big mistake I see among people who cannot fall asleep or stay asleep is to push themselves harder to sleep," he said. "You have to consolidate your time in bed."

That means don't lie awake in bed for hours. If you can't go to sleep, don't stay in bed. Get up and do something relaxing that might make you sleepy, like reading or listening to music.

He asks sleep center patients what time they go to bed and wake up. Consistency is key, sleep experts say. Bhat goes to bed around 10 or 10:30 p.m. every night and gets seven to seven-and-a-half hours of sleep.

It's especially important over the next few days to try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even, as difficult as it is to hear, on weekends. Bhat says with consistency you should be able to get your body back on a regular sleep schedule in five to seven nights.

"Let's devote time for sleep," he said. "Let's not make sleep like something that is, 'Ah, you know what, I've got a lot of things to do, I've got assignments, I've got deadlines.' We should not compromise on sleep."

Sleep doctors tell patients that the bedroom should only be used for two things: sleep and sex.

Don't take your cellphone to bed. You need to turn off the electronics, the TV too, at least 30 minutes before you go to bed, Bhat tells his patients.

In fact, just keep the electronics out of the bedroom, Bhat recommends.

"How do you expect a person to go to sleep when... you're bringing your laptop into your bedroom?" said Bhat. "And you shut it off and you're trying to go to sleep and you can't.

"Your brain no longer connects that time as bedtime, it's your laptop time, it's your phone time, it's a social media time. It's your time to look at news. It's time to look at stocks. It's time to look at what's happening in Ukraine. It's time for us to look at what the gas prices are.

"When you're looking at all those things, guess what happens to your brain? Your brain gets stimulated. It loses that urge to go to sleep."

The sleep medicine academy recommends these steps to minimize the fatigue you'll feel after the clocks change:

— For a couple of nights before the change, shift your bedtime 15 to 20 minutes earlier each night.

— Start adjusting the timing of daily routines to begin giving your body new "time cues." For instance, eat dinner a little earlier each night.

— On Saturday, set your clocks ahead one hour early in the evening, then go to bed at your normal bedtime.

— On Sunday, spend some time outside in the early morning sunlight, which will help set that internal clock that regulates sleep and alertness.

— Also on Sunday, go to bed early.

Then, here's how you can get back into your sleep groove, according to Bhat, the Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Mayo Clinic:

— If you feel sleepy the Sunday after the change to daylight saving time,

take a short 15- to 20- minute nap in the early afternoon—not too close to bedtime.

— Make sure your bedroom is dark—blackout curtains can help.

— Relax in the evening before you go to bed.

— Don't drink [caffeinated drinks](#) like tea and coffee before bed.

— Release those triggers. To keep your mind from racing after you get in bed, pick a time during the day—late afternoon, for instance—when you can sit and think about those things that might keep you from falling asleep. Do it for four or five days, Bhat said, which will train your brain that when you go to bed you've already taken care of those thoughts.

©2022 The Kansas City Star.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Doctors want daylight saving time abolished. Here's why, and what you can do about it (2022, March 12) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-03-doctors-daylight-abolished.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--