

SCRIPT-PRINT-Turning Back Time Takes Its Toll

We're not talking about the kind of time change Cher refers to in her hit song. No, we're talking about the change back to Daylight Saving Time (DST) and it'll officially happen at 2 a.m. this coming Sunday. Potentially, setting clocks back should give most of us an extra hour of sleep but research shows most people don't use their time that way.

Dr. Kaninika Verma, Clinical Sleep Director for OSF HealthCare, says research shows most people simply stay up later and watch a little more TV, play on their computers, or in some cases drink more alcohol because bars stay open later.

She says light has a huge impact on our body's circadian rhythm, otherwise known as a sleep/wake cycle. So when that changes, it throws the body out of sync. When we "fall back," Dr. Verma says stress hormones start booting up the body's systems hours in advance of waking and when the clock changes, they are out of sync.

"You've got more stress hormones than what you're used to for that time period because you're starting to wake up or your alarm clock is going off when you think you should be sleeping a little bit longer. So that's why we see that bump in the number of heart attacks around that time," she said.

In fact, many scientists see an increased risk for heart attack and stroke during the days following a time change. Tiredness induced by the clock change is thought to be the main cause for the increase in [traffic accidents](#) on the Monday following the start of DST.

Dr. Verma suggests preparing for the time change by going to bed 15 minutes later the four days leading up to the change.

"If you want to switch your clock, do it in 15 minute increments and don't expect it to happen overnight. You can't just go to bed an hour ahead and expect it to work. It's just not going to happen," she advised.

So, if you go to bed at 9 p.m., she suggests starting to go at 9:15 p.m., then 9:30 p.m., then 9:45 p.m. and finally 10 p.m. which will then be your usual 9 p.m. sleep time when you set your clock back over the weekend.

Regardless of the twice a year movement of the clock by one hour, lots of people have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep. Between 50 and 70 million U.S. adults have some type of sleep or wakefulness disorder and the impact is affecting people's quality of life.

Recent results from the world's largest sleep study to date, involving 40,000 people from around the globe, found participants who slept four hours or less performed cognitively as if they were almost nine years older. Participants' reasoning and verbal abilities were two of the actions most strongly affected by sleep.

Dr. Verma says sleep is not a luxury. It is a vital sign and not getting enough sleep, or getting poor-quality sleep, increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Sleep deprivation also hurts the body's immune system so you can get sick more easily.

At Home Sleep Study

If you've been hesitant to do anything about your trouble sleeping, this might be an incentive. Dr. Verma says technology has advanced so many people can do an at-home sleep study rather than having to spend the night in a sleep lab. A patient who meets certain criteria can take equipment home to record critical measurements.

"It's looking at air flow from the nose; how much air you're moving. Bands around the chest to see if you're moving. An oximeter to see what oxygen levels are and also there is a snore mic so we know if someone's snoring, we can hear the snoring too."

In addition to Sleep Apnea, OSF HealthCare sleep medicine specialty doctors can evaluate conditions characterized by disturbances of sleep patterns and conditions such as Restless Leg Syndrome or Narcolepsy that can cause sleep abnormalities.

Many sleep disorders go undiagnosed and Dr. Verma points out that can affect not only your health, but personal relationships impacted by changes in mood, motivation and productivity.

Check Out Tips & Take Our Sleep Quiz

[Here are some Tips for Better Sleeping](#) from OSF HealthCare's Illinois Neurological Institute

[Answer this quick quiz](#) to find out how much you know about sleep.

Get Help

[Learn more about sleep disorders](#) and [find a provider](#) to help address your sleep-related problems.