

healthline

Why Daylight Saving Time Makes You Feel Terrible

Written by [Jessica Peralta](#) on March 8, 2019

And here's a few ways to feel better after you spring forward.

If you get a case of the Mondays following daylight saving time, there may actually be medical evidence for it.

Not only are we losing an hour of sleep by springing forward, but **our circadian rhythm — aka our internal clock — gets out of whack**, which may cause us to feel off.

Plenty of us feel a very real sense of “blah” following the time change.

Dr. Jay Puangco, a neurologist specializing in sleep medicine at the Pickup Family Neurosciences Institute at Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian in Newport Beach, California, says **it's important not to underestimate the importance of sleep**, and that the brain needs a little prep time to get used to the new schedule.

“Poor sleep can lead to craving for high-calorie foods, unhealthy snacking, and fast food,” he said. **“There is less desire to exercise. This combination can lead to poor judgment, decreased productivity, and irritability. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to a cascade of physical illnesses as common as a cold and as severe as diabetes or heart failure.”**

But not everyone is affected the same way, or even at all.

“Because we lose one hour of sleep, there is a possibility of feeling tired because of this change,” said Dr. Robert Segal, a cardiologist and co-founder of Labfinder.com in New York.

“For some, it might not mean much. But for others, it can cause harm, such as an **increased risk of heart attack, workplace injuries due to lack of sleep, or even traffic accidents.** Hospitals even noted that **the number of stroke hospitalizations increase,**” he said.

Cardiac risks

Of more concern are some studies that have shown an increase in heart attacks following daylight saving time.

Dr. Subbarao Myla, director of Cardiac Cath Labs at Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian, says it's still unknown what's causing the increase in heart attacks.

“The actual increase in heart attack usually occurs on the spring-forward Monday,” Myla said. He adds heart attack occurrence may increase dramatically that day. “This wide variation in increase is due to how people define this heart attack population.”

He says some studies, such as the [Michigan Medicine](#) study, only count certain types of heart attack care, such as angioplasty stent, not taking into account all heart attack treatment.

“Hoag completed a two-year-long study on this same topic, and found an increase of 50 percent in heart attack on the spring-forward Monday,” Myla said. **“In Hoag's study, we took into account all heart attack treatment, from medical management to angioplasty, stent, and bypass.”**

Myla adds that **some studies have also shown a decrease in heart attacks in the fall after daylight saving ends.**



Yes, it's already time to spring forward an hour. Getty Images

The researchers' current theories about why there's a risk to the cardiac system is that the time change leads to a **disturbance in the circadian biological rhythm**, according to Myla.

"**Elevated stress** due to adjusting to a new routine, having lack of sleep, which can cause **lack of concentration** and other issues," Myla said. "Along with a rhythm disturbance, **blood pressure rises** during this time."

Myla points out **blood can actually change consistency**.

"**Blood becomes thicker and stickier**," he said. "In general, if you map out the timing of when heart attacks most commonly take place, they happen between 5 to 7 a.m. This time of day, your platelet activity increases and blood sugar rises."

Notably, by Tuesday, the increased risk of heart attack is down to 5 percent. By Wednesday, it's back to baseline, Myla says.

How to feel better

Though you can't pick what time it is, there are things you can do with light.

"Turning many lights on if awakening early enough to be in darkness and turning on the same light as soon as it gets dark may help your body make these time change transitions earlier," Segil said.

"These light cues may help your body get used to the new schedule faster. Trying to maintain a constant total sleep time or time in bed during these changes can also shorten the time to 'feel back to normal' after a time change," he said.

Ultimately, not thinking about it too much may provide some help. After all, **anxiety and stress** contribute to all types of health issues, including high blood pressure.

"Some people have just a mental block issue," said Dr. Sanjiv Patel, a cardiologist at MemorialCare Heart & Vascular Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center in California. "Some people take it in stride and have no issues."

Dr. Beth Ann Malow, a professor of neurology and director of the Vanderbilt Sleep Disorders Center in Tennessee, says it's important to get enough rest around the time change. But she also stresses the importance of not becoming stressed about heart attack risk.

"Try to go to bed and wake up 15 minutes earlier starting a few days before the time change, then an additional 15 minutes earlier the day before the time change," she said. "This will help your body make a more smooth transition rather than a more abrupt one."

The bottom line

Daylight saving time starts this Sunday, so remember to set your clocks forward an hour.

It's true the time change can make people feel pretty lousy for a few days and even increase the risk of heart attack in some cases.

But there are steps you can take to feel better, including **turning lights on if you wake up and it's still dark out**. Additionally, practicing **going to bed earlier** a few days before can also help.