



News Column for Week of November 12, 2018

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The Circadian Rhythm and sleep

Has your circadian rhythm been disrupted? If you are wondering what that really is, the circadian rhythm is the name given to the "internal body clock" that regulates our 24-hour cycle of biological processes. There are patterns of brain wave activity, hormone production, cell regeneration, and other biological activities linked to this 24-hour cycle.

The circadian rhythm is important in determining sleeping patterns such as when we sleep and when we wake, every 24 hours. The normal circadian clock is set by the light-dark cycle over 24 hours. This gives some insight into how our recent time change might affect our circadian rhythm.

We often associate the "falling back" from Daylight Saving Time as an opportunity for an extra hour of sleep. However, many people don't, or can't take advantage of the extra hour of sleep when "falling back." The resulting shift in the body's daily sleep-wake cycle can disrupt sleep for several days.

During this past week, many people may have experienced waking up earlier, had more trouble falling asleep, and were more likely to wake up during the night. Researchers suggest giving ourselves a week to truly adjust to a time change.

Getting our brains, our bodies, and the current routines of our day in sync with the light-of-day changes, takes a little time. While many of us might think we will make up lost sleep within a day or two, if disrupted sleep is sustained, other parts of our lives can be affected.

Sleep is important for learning and memory, metabolism and weight maintenance, safety, mood, heart health, and disease prevention. Sometimes it's obvious when a person is sleep-deprived. Inadequate sleep can cause irritability and stress. Mood and sleep are closely connected.

The not-so-obvious longer term consequences of not getting enough sleep can affect the basic functions of storing carbohydrates and regulating hormones. Research has also revealed that people who consistently fail to get enough sleep are at an increased risk of chronic disease.

This recent time change may not have disturbed our sleeping patterns. However, if we find ourselves in a pattern of not getting the seven to nine hours of recommended sleep, we might want to evaluate our routines:

- Exercise, but not within a few hours of bedtime.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Set regular bedtime and waking hours.
- Avoid reading or watching television while in bed.
- Keep a sleep journal to keep track of activities, diet and other things that might affect how you're sleeping
- Consult a health care provider if you're consistently having trouble sleeping.

More information on the topic of sleep is available at K-State Research and Extension Southwind offices, and by contacting Barbara at 620-625-8620 or by email at bstockeb@ksu.edu.