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Sleep Tips to Put a Spring in Your Step [1]

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This Sunday at 2 AM the clocks "spring forward" one hour into Daylight Saving Time. Unfortunately, adjusting our internal clocks, also known as our circadian rhythm, often takes a lot longer than adjusting the one on our nightstands—a week or even more, according to a [paper](#) published in *Sleep Medicine Reviews* [2].

"Losing" an hour each spring often causes people to have trouble falling into a deep sleep and wake up frequently throughout the night. These additional disruptions can be especially problematic for people with cancer who already have trouble sleeping, either as a [physical side effect](#) [3] of cancer or cancer treatment or as a result of stress and [anxiety](#) [4].

So as we prepare to set our clocks ahead, here are 10 tips to help you sleep better before, during, and after this transition:

1. Try to go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time every day, even if you did not sleep well the night before and during the weekend.
2. If you aren't doing some sort of exercise almost every day, start. The type of physical activity you do should be based on your age, fitness level, stage and type of cancer, and cancer treatment. Talk with your doctor before starting any new exercise routine.
3. Limit the amount of caffeine you consume, and avoid drinking coffee, tea, carbonated sodas, hot chocolate, and other caffeinated beverages after noon.
4. Decrease the amount of alcohol you drink, and avoid drinking alcoholic beverages before bedtime. Although alcohol can have a calming effect that may help you fall asleep, it disrupts the sleep cycle throughout the night, leaving you feeling less than refreshed in the morning.
5. Stop smoking, or at least cut back, and avoid smoking after 6 PM. The nicotine found in tobacco acts as a stimulant and can keep you awake.
6. Avoid naps. Although it might feel necessary at the time, napping during the day can disrupt your body's sleep/wake schedule. If you must take a nap, limit it to 20 to 30 minutes.
7. Eat dinner before 8 PM because the digestive process can disrupt sleep. However, since hunger can disrupt sleep as well, eating a light snack before bedtime may help.
8. Minimize the amount of light you expose yourself to before bed because light is a signal to your body to stay awake. Consider turning down the lights and turning off the TV and computer at least an hour before going to bed.
9. Do something you enjoy and find relaxing before you go to bed instead, such as taking a bath, reading, or doing relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or meditation.
10. If you don't fall asleep within 15 to 20 minutes of getting into bed, leave the bedroom and do something relaxing until you feel tired.

For more strategies to help you get a better night's sleep, listen to this Cancer.Net podcast.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/blog/2014-03/sleep-tips-put-spring-your-step>

[2] <http://www.smrj-journal.com/article/S1087-0792%2812%2900114-1/abstract>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25058>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/anxiety>

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