

For Immediate Release

March 4, 2024

Contact: Kay Schmidt, Emergency Response Coordinator, 308-345-4223

Health Effects of Daylight Savings Time

Along with the changing of clocks to daylight savings time comes the disruptions in sleep patterns. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) recommends taking steps to reduce the impact of the time change and get a healthy amount of rest.

Surveys from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine have found that about two-thirds of Americans would prefer to eliminate daylight savings time (DST), and more than half experience tiredness following the switch. Researchers have argued that the time change may have negative consequences for our bodies and minds.

“There is some evidence that changing the clocks increases the possibility of heart attack and stroke,” says Kay Schmidt, Emergency Response Coordinator for SWNPHD. “Not getting enough rest can have a big impact on our bodies and minds.” Lack of sleep can lead to decreases in cardiovascular health, increases in diabetes, obesity, poor mental health, and mental function.

Our internally generated clocks, also known as our circadian rhythms, are synchronized by sunlight. Exposure to more light closer to bedtime makes it harder to fall asleep at our usual bedtime, and can reduce the amount of sleep we are able to get each night.

While these risks may be higher during the warmer months, there are ways to acclimatize to the time change. Acclimation may only take a week or so and will help to combat the negative health effects. Below is a list of suggestions to consider.

- Gradually adjust your sleep and wake times. Shift your bedtime 15 to 20 minutes earlier each night for a few nights before the time changes.
- Set your clocks ahead one hour on the evening before the change date and go to bed at your normal bedtime.
- Head outside for some early morning sunlight the following few mornings. Exposure to sunlight will help regulate your body’s rhythm.
- Get plenty of sleep on Sunday nights to ensure you are rested and ready for the week.

“While there is still debate around whether to permanently eliminate the time change, the best course of action is to adopt good sleep habits,” continues Schmidt. “Staying consistent with bedtime rituals and following suggestions for the time change will help you to navigate daylight savings time with ease.”

For more information contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. The website swhealth.ne.gov contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.