

# Body Clock

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I really don't like the time of year when the time change comes along, especially when we "spring forward" in time. I really wish they would leave it alone. It seems like it takes me a week or more to feel normal again. Why would just an hour shift in time affect me so much? Just an hour can throw our body rhythms off and it takes time to reset them. Body rhythm....it is a real thing and is called circadian rhythm.

Circadian rhythms are physical, mental and emotional behavior changes that follow a 24 hour cycle. These rhythms have a direct link to light and are found in most living things. Circadian rhythms determine sleep and eating patterns of all animals and human beings. There are clear patterns of brain wave activity, hormone production, cell regeneration and other biological activities linked to the daily cycle. There is a natural ebb and flow in our energy throughout the day that is oftentimes controlled by an area in the brain that responds to light and dark.

In Chinese medicine it is referred to as the body-energy clock, where Qi (energy) moves in two hour intervals through the body organ system. During sleep, the Qi is drawn inward to restore the body and during the day the Qi moves outward to assist in the bodily functions such as digestion and elimination. Lungs are at their peak in the early morning, which is why it is best to schedule your exercise at that time of day rather than later. Also active in the morning hours is our large intestine. To stay with the body's natural rhythm of this, I like to start my day by drinking a detox tea in the morning. One of my favorite detox drinks (especially in the spring/summer) is CCF tea (Coriander, Cumin, and Fennel). I boost it with some green tea along with adding 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice or 1 tsp of Sole (saltwater - pronounced solay). The liver stores and cleanses blood as well as hormones and our emotions. The liver is at its peak between 1 am - 3 am which is the time when we are most often in our deepest sleep and the body and mind is the calmest.



A lot more goes on within our bodies during the 24 hour time cycle than we are most likely aware of and this is why even an one hour shift of time can throw us off for a bit. It is important for our health to choose lifestyle habits that help us synchronize our body systems to the ebb and flow of energy. A couple of tips to keep or reset our body clock during a time change, travel and to just be in the flow of the natural rhythm of the body are:

1. Follow the sun ~ In the morning open the shades and let the light in. This will help you get moving in the morning. Get as much light during the day as possible. At night as you

are bringing your energy down ready for sleep, dim the lights. Try to keep out light in the room you sleep in, as much as possible.

2. Adjust your activity levels ~ During the morning and day allow those to be your most active times. Wind down and take it easy the closer it gets to sleep time. That means electronics as well. Read, write or do other calming activities just before lights out.
3. Adjust meal schedule ~ Eat your largest meals during the morning and afternoon. This is when your digestive organs are naturally at their peak. Eating a big meal before bed often leaves you with a heavy feeling and it makes the body work harder during its resting time.
4. Adjust your mind ~ Don't sleep in. There really is no catching up on sleep. The body functions better when we stick with a habitual schedule as much as possible. If you have to get up in the dark, then use bright lighting as you prepare your day. If you have to sleep while it is still light, block out as much light as possible.

Just a few simple changes can make a big difference in adjusting and honoring your body's natural rhythms.

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