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BETTER SLEEP

Fall Back, Spring Forward: Helping Kids Adjust to Daylight Saving Time

By Gina Roberts-Grey

The start of daylight saving time ushers in longer days and, for some, dreams of warmer weather. But while “springing forward” can be cause

for celebration for many, it also can cause headaches for parents of young children, who can have trouble adjusting to losing an hour of sleep.

Alanna McGinn, a certified sleep consultant and founder of [Good Night Sleep Site](#), said any change in a sleep routine can be tough to adjust to, but “springing forward” is often tougher than “falling back.” “The abrupt loss of an hour of sleep can be a shock to the system,” she said.

To lessen the shock, McGinn suggests slowly modifying your child’s sleep schedule beginning a week or two before daylight saving time kicks in.

“Instead of the sudden change in routine, slowly introduce your child to a daylight savings time sleep schedule by putting him to bed a little earlier than usual,” she said. “Then wake him the same amount of time earlier the following morning.”

For instance, on March 1, move bedtime and wake time up 15 minutes. “Use those new times for two or three nights,” McGinn said. Two nights later, bump up the times another 15 minutes, and so on. When it’s time to change the clocks March 9, a child whose bedtime was 7 p.m. and wake time was 6 a.m. will be used to going to bed at the “new” 7 p.m. and waking at the “new” 6 a.m., she said.

But remember to apply the gradual time changes to your child’s entire schedule.

Tamiko Kelly, a certified maternity and child sleep consultant, suggests also pushing up mealtimes 15 minutes every few days, as well as pre-bedtime routines such as baths and storytime.

“Your child should eat breakfast earlier in the morning, too,” Kelly noted.

Even after successfully preparing your child to adjust to daylight saving time, you may find the longer daylight hours make it tough for kids to fall asleep. If that’s the case, invest in some room-darkening shades that block light—they can do wonders to help kids stick to a bedtime schedule and increase their chances of a full night’s sleep.



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