

SnoozeNews



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Will Daylight Savings Time increase the number of patients with Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome?

What is Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome?

Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome (DSPS), falls under the category of Circadian Rhythm Disorders and is the most prevalent amongst this group of sleep disorders. People who have DSPS go to bed in the early morning hours and tend to wake up later in the morning. For example, someone may go to bed at 2am and wake up at 9am.

What are Circadian Rhythm Disorders?

Our circadian rhythm is our internal clock which tells us when it's time to go to bed and when it's time to wake up. Often times, we do things during the day that confuse our internal clocks and either make it harder to get to sleep at night, or harder to stay asleep into the morning. Circadian Rhythm Disorder not only affects our sleep, but our

Who has Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome?

Anyone can have DSPS, however, some people are more prone. For instance, those who feel more awake and alert at nighttime may struggle with falling asleep at regular times. In addition, those who throw off their internal clocks by doing something such as taking long naps during the day, are more prone to DSPS. Technology also plays a major role in Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome. The light that is emitted from phones, computer, etc. sends a signal, similar to the one we receive when we are in contact with a blue sky, signaling to our brains that it is time to stay awake.

Signs of Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome

- Inability to fall asleep
- Inability to wake up at the desired time and excessive daytime sleepiness
- Generally no other sleep problems
- Depression and behaviour problems

Therefore, using technology late at night can actually 'trick' our brains into thinking we should be awake rather than asleep.

Shift workers will often experience DSPS because they are required to go to bed and get up at times that our bodies are not naturally build to adapt to; for example, going to bed when the sun rises and waking up when the sun sets. According to the American Sleep Foundation, about 15% of teens and adults experience DSPS.

What does this have to do with daylight savings time?

Once Daylight Savings Time occurs on November 2nd at 2am, all of our clocks will be set back 1 hour. You may think 1 hour couldn't possibly do harm to our internal clocks, but that's where we are wrong. For many of us, that one hour may be an extra hour of sleep, but it also means our bodies have to adjust to different external factors such as when the sun rises and sets. It is important to note that the presence of the sun plays a large role in our internal clocks. In addition, we have to trick our bodies into going to bed earlier that night; for many of us, we will still go to bed at 10pm, but won't fall asleep because our bodies still feel it's only 9pm. For those who get easily disgruntled with not being able to fall asleep, this can start a vicious cycle.

What do I do?

If you think you are experiencing signs and symptoms of DSPS, speak to your Doctor about improving your sleep hygiene. This will enable you to start practicing healthier sleep habits.

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