

Spring Forward

Don't lose sleep when the time changes

Jennifer Humora

It's going to happen to you in the middle of the night, like it or not. It's probably going to take a toll on you and your kids for several days. On March 9th, you're going to "spring forward" into daylight saving time along with the

rest of us, and like a bad cold or an out-of-town trip, it will likely disrupt the sleep schedule you've fought so hard to establish with your child.

"Parents get blindsided by these things, so it's really important to talk about the change and have some

expectations," says Polly Moore, Ph.D., an author and sleep researcher.

Does springing forward mean your child, who normally wakes up at 6:30 a.m., will stay in bed until 7:30 a.m.? Does it mean if his regular bedtime is 7:30 p.m. he'll be up until 8:30



p.m.? What time should he nap, and how will you handle this temporary turmoil with one hour less sleep?

"Time change does affect us," says Moore. "It takes your body about a week to get used to the mismatch." During that week, you may see your child being less focused and more cranky and klutzy than usual.

There are simple steps you can take this spring to minimize sleep loss in your family.

- Gradually introduce your child to his new bedtime by putting him to bed five to 15 minutes early for several nights before daylight saving time begins. By the time you move your clock forward an hour, your child may be used to going to bed at the new time.
- Wake your child at the same time each day instead of letting him sleep in. Sleeping in the day after daylight savings time begins may make it harder for him to go to bed on time the next night, and it may take longer to get back on schedule.
- Keep nap times the same as when he usually takes them. A short nap in the early afternoon the day after daylight savings time begins can be helpful for older children as well as adults who are dragging after the loss of an hour's sleep.

It doesn't hurt to try the various sleep strategies, says Moore, but being prepared for change is even more important.

"Anticipate that they will wake up at the mismatch times, an hour's sleep deprived," says Moore. "Look for signs of sleepiness and follow those signs instead of the clock. Put your child down to sleep when he looks sleepy instead of trying to force a change."

Dr. Moore considers a healthy sleep schedule during daylight savings time and throughout the year so important that she has written a guide for parents called *The 90-Minute Baby Sleep Program: Follow Your Child's Natural Rhythms for Better Nights and Naps*.

"Long before I wrote the book, I'd been giving talks for new parents via the Scripps Parent Connection because I believe the consequences

of poor sleep in babies and children are ... potentially serious and long-lasting," says Moore. According to the National Sleep Foundation, sleep shortages have been linked with obesity and behavior problems in kids and even attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Moore says "springing forward" is more difficult than "falling back" will



be on November 2nd. "It's easier to lengthen our day than shorten it," she says, just as it's easier to travel west than to travel east. In fact, the adjustment to daylight saving time can feel a lot like jet leg. And whatever approach you take to dealing with it, you and your child will adjust within a few days to a week."

For most parents, helping our children get the proper amount of sleep is one of our greatest struggles, even without the added challenge of daylight savings time.

Dr. Moore says that's completely normal. "I have 20 years of experience in sleep disorders and sleep disorders research, but didn't become an expert in infant sleep until I had kids. And I was amazed how hard it was, given all my education and training."

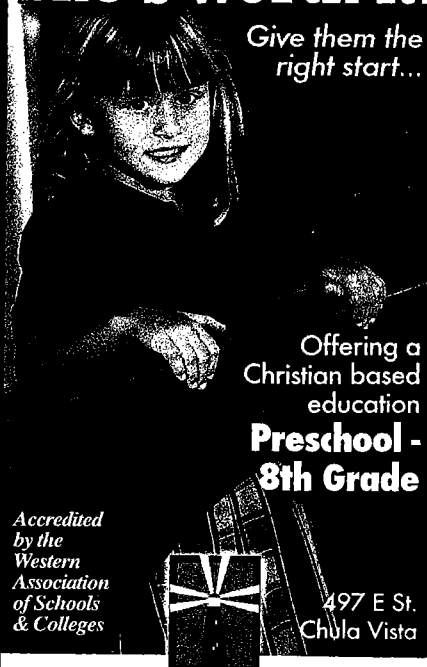
Visit the Website of the National Sleep Foundation's for more information on the importance of sleep www.SleepFoundation.org.

Jennifer Humora is the mother of two terrible sleepers and a freelance writer living in San Diego.

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