



## Tips for Dealing with Daylight Savings Time

Daylight savings time is coming up this weekend. Most parents don't mind it so much in the fall when they gain an extra hour, but it sends fear through people's bones when they hear they are going to have to lose an hour of sleep! Every year I get a TON of questions asking for the best way to handle daylight savings time and children's sleep. So here it is:

If I had my way, there would not be a daylight savings time. I think it really does affect not only children's sleep patterns but adults, too. In fact, statistically, there is an 8% increase in traffic accidents the Monday after daylight savings time kicks in. It really does have an effect on all of us, and it can increase our sleep debt – especially in children, who tend to be much more structured with going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time every morning. That is usually why people notice it the most in young children.

So what is the best way to handle it?

My advice is to “split the difference.”

For “Fall Back,” my recommendation to all parents is just to leave the clocks alone so it's not a psychologically upsetting event to see your little one up an hour earlier. Just get up at your usual time and start the day. After your cup of coffee and a bit of breakfast, then you can go around changing the clocks. It will feel much better this way, trust me!

If, for example, your little one usually takes a morning nap around 9:30, you will adjust this to 9:00 for the three days after the time change. It will be a bit of a push for your child, but not so much that it will cause much damage to her schedule. Do the same for the afternoon nap.

Let's say your child usually goes to bed at 7 p.m. I recommend putting that child to bed at 6:30 p.m. for the first three days following the time change. (This will FEEL like 7:30 to your child.) And it will take about a week for your child's body to get used to this. It takes everybody's body roughly one week to adjust any kind of change in sleeping habits.

If you have children over the age of two, you can put a digital clock in the room and put a piece of tape over the minutes, so that they can see if it is 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock, but they cannot see the minutes, which often confuses toddlers. Just set the clock forward half an hour so that at 6:30 it says 7:00 and let them get up a little earlier than normal, knowing that, by the end of the week, they will be back on track and sleep until their normal wakeup time.

If you are dealing with a baby, you cannot do that. Do not rush in as soon as you hear your baby waking up, because you do not want to send a message that getting up at 6 a.m. is okay now. So if she normally wakes at 7:00, but is now up at 6:00, you will wait till ten after the first day, and then twenty after the next, then 6:30 the next day and, by the end of the week, your baby's schedule should be adjusted to the new time and waking up at their usual hour.

On the fourth night, just get in line with the new time so your baby is back to going to bed when the clock says 7:00 pm. Adjust naps to the correct time on day 4 as well.



For “Spring Forward,” the same “split the difference” rule applies. So if naptime was usually 9:30, it’s now 10:00 a.m. The same goes for the afternoon nap, and bedtime is 7:30. This will mean that your baby is going to bed a little earlier or sooner than the normal wait between sleeps, but again it’s not so much so that it’s going to interfere with her schedule too much. It may take her a bit more time to fall asleep since she may not be as tired, but in a week’s time she will be back on track again.

On day and night 4, move to the correct time on the clock again.

Give it time and know that your baby will get back on schedule within a week, possibly two.