

November
**Pulmonary
Hypertension
Awareness Month**

PULMONARY HYPERTENSION (PH) is overly high blood pressure in the vessels that carry blood from the right side of the heart to the lungs.

PH is not the same as the more familiar systemic high blood pressure, and is a far more serious condition. Systemic blood pressure can be easily measured with a cuff inflated on the arm, but PH is much harder to evaluate and diagnose, and can lead to right heart failure if left untreated. A noninvasive echocardiogram is one method used to estimate pulmonary artery pressure, but only an invasive procedure—right heart catheterization—can yield a direct measurement.

PH can affect men and women of all ages and racial or ethnic groups. It can occur along with another disease or condition, such as pregnancy, heart and blood vessel diseases, lung diseases, liver diseases, sleep apnea, connective tissue diseases such as lupus and scleroderma, thyroid diseases, HIV infection or use of certain diet medicines or illicit drugs.

PH symptoms can include:

- Frequent tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Irregular heartbeat
- Fainting
- Swollen ankles and legs
- Fluid in the abdomen

Diagnosis of PH is so difficult because many other diseases—including congestive heart failure, asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease—also have these same symptoms, and need to be ruled out before a PH diagnosis is made.

New treatments have improved survival rates and quality of life for those living with this condition. Early diagnosis is crucial.

The Pulmonary Hypertension Association has been providing support, education, research, advocacy and awareness of the condition since 1990. Visit www.phassociation.org to learn more about this disease and how you can help find a cure.—David Wight



Tablet or smartphone?
Scan or click here to see a video about the importance of early PH diagnosis.



HEALTHY LIVING



MEDIA BAKERY

Effects of the “extra” hour
Shifting to standard time can take a toll

By Marijke Vroomen Durning

ON THE FIRST Sunday in November, millions of Americans will perform their twice-a-year ritual of resetting their clocks, this time moving back one hour to standard time from daylight saving time. Most clocks are fairly simple to adjust, but adapting to the change is not always so easy for people.

Researchers have proven that time changes have a physical effect on the human body. Fall's change may not have as strong an impact as spring's switch, which causes us to “lose” an hour, but it can still have a significant effect on how we react, ranging from a feeling of being “off” for a couple of days to having a heart attack. In fact, a study published in 2008 found that there is an increase in heart attacks during the first day following the change to standard time (and for three days following the switch to daylight saving).

You can look at the time-change effect as you would jet lag, says Dr. Marc Leavey, an internist at Mercy Medical Center in Lutherville, Maryland. “Suddenly your body clock is disrupted. Your body is thinking that it's dinnertime, but it really isn't yet,” he explains. By adding an hour to the day, you're playing with the peaks and valleys in your hormone and cortisol levels, and so on. When you shift the clock forward or backward, you're throwing your cycle off and things just don't feel right.

If you're tempted to use a stimulant or sedative until things feel normal again, Leavey cautions against it. Their effects could end up making things worse in the long run. Instead,

he suggests shifting your sleep patterns before the actual change. While it would be easier if the official time switch occurred before the weekend began, you can soften the blow by going to bed a half hour later on Friday and another half hour later on Saturday, says Leavey.

If you take medications, you may want to move the times gradually too. Medications you take once or twice a day aren't too much of an issue, but those that you have to take every four or six hours may need some adjustments. Leavey suggests taking the same approach as with adjusting your sleep. Push back the time you take your pill by a half hour one day, and the next day take the pill at the regular time. This prevents an extra-long gap between doses.

The fall time change also coincides with shorter daylight hours for many Americans. “In the fall, you go out at 6 o'clock and it's dark. You have no interest in doing anything,” says Leavey. It's important to try to get outside as much as possible to soak up a few rays, even if it's for a short while during your lunch break. Some people use light boxes during the fall and winter months. These mimic the effect of sunlight and may help people feel more awake.

The good news is that the effects from the time change are temporary. And before you know it, you'll be changing all those clocks again when it's time to spring forward. 📺

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