



## Helping Kids with Disabilities Adjust to Daylight Saving Time (DST)

In many cases, children with developmental disabilities usually thrive on specific routines and structure. Daylight Saving Time can get in the way of these routines, so it's important to start the [adjustment](#) process early so everyone – parents and kids both – can minimize the number of grumpy, groggy days.



- Start adjusting schedules gradually, not all at once. Because Daylight Saving Time changes the schedule by a full hour, a sudden shift could mean days or weeks of kids trying to wake up too early or too late. In the week or weeks leading up to DST, shift your child's schedule gradually in 10-15 minute increments. This makes the change less painful.
- Stick to the same activities and daily routines. If your child is used to reading a book and taking a bath before bed, keep it up! If your morning involves always making the same foods, don't change it. Keeping activities consistent ensures your child knows what to expect during the daytime hours.
- Limit stimulation and screen time before bed. Studies have shown that letting kids have their tablets, phones or laptops in their rooms contributes to poor sleep quality and a more difficult time falling asleep, because the devices are very stimulating. Rather than watching an exciting TV show before bed, kids could be encouraged to read or quietly draw instead of doing energizing activities that could hinder their falling asleep.
- Create a social story for your child. A social story can help your child understand why the clocks are changing and what to do. Include references to familiar places, objects and routines to help your child orient themselves.
- Dim the lights before bedtime and get as much light as possible in the mornings. Dimming the lights helps regulate your child's circadian rhythms, while blackout curtains can help keep kids from waking up too early when the days become longer.
- Encourage exercise. Unstructured outdoor playtime gets kids out into fresh air and



provides an opportunity for exploration and family bonding. Keeping your child occupied with physical activity can help ensure they will be ready for bed and able to sleep soundly.

- Incentivize good behavior. If your child needs to go to bed earlier, or stay in bed a little longer, reward good behavior with something they've been looking forward to, whether it's a tasty treat they eat only on special occasions or a trip to a museum, movie theater, or store.
- Be patient. Everyone tends to be a bit cranky or groggy in the first few days after a shift, so it's important to remember that your child will likely be too. Remember that the effects will only last a few days to a week and a routine might re-establish itself.

Nobody enjoys Daylight Saving Time's impact on their schedule, and it can be especially hard on kids used to very specific ways of doing things. If you have additional concerns about ways to help adjust your child's internal clock, talk to your child's pediatrician or developmental specialist.