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## Cherries a 'Natural' Way to Reset Body Clock for Daylight Saving Time

NEW YORK -- Our clocks may spring forward on March 11, but our body's internal time clocks often take longer to adjust. Experts say we may find help with a surprising source of melatonin: cherries.



Melatonin is produced naturally by the body in small amounts and helps regulate your sleep-wake cycle -- helping to induce sleepiness at night and wakefulness during the day. Recent studies have revealed that tart cherries are one of the few known food sources of melatonin. Tart cherries are the variety of cherries that are sold year-round as dried, frozen and juice.

"Even a slight increase in the melatonin level in the body can improve the body's circadian rhythm or sleep patterns," said Russel J. Reiter, Ph.D, a nutrition researcher at the University of Texas Health Science Center and one of the world's leading authorities on melatonin. "We've learned that melatonin from food enters the bloodstream and binds to sites in the brain where it helps restore the body's natural levels of melatonin, which can help enhance the natural sleep process," said Reiter.

Beyond the benefits of resetting the body's internal time clock when we change our clocks, melatonin also may be helpful for treating jet lag for international travelers, for new parents who are up all night and for late- shift workers trying to adjust to a new schedule. Increasing melatonin also has been shown to help with sleep-onset insomnia in older adults with a melatonin deficiency.

"By age 30, blood levels of melatonin begin to decline and by age 60, levels can be significantly lower, which may account for the sleep disturbances that often occur with aging," Reiter said. "If eaten regularly, tart cherries may help regulate the body's natural sleep cycle and increase sleep efficiency, including decreasing the time it takes to fall asleep."

Melatonin supplement pills have been heavily promoted in health food stores, pharmacies and on the internet as a sleep aid. But Reiter and other experts suggest food sources of melatonin, such as cherries, may be a better alternative for boosting the body's own supply of melatonin.



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