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Body Clocks and Rhythms

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Healthy Choices

Body Clocks and Rhythms

BY WINSTON CRAIG

Many of our bodily functions occur with amazing regularity. The heart beats about once per second. Intestinal contractions occur approximately every three minutes. The menstrual cycle is once per month. We breathe, on average, once every four heart beats. We blink every two to three seconds. Sleep patterns follow a 90-minute cycle. The electrical waves of our brain show a regular pattern of eight to 12 cycles per second.

The human body is also influenced by daily rhythms. Body temperature, blood pressure, and many hormones, such as cortisol, all fluctuate on a regular daily cycle. Experiencing jet lag after airplane travel across several time zones illustrates the importance of keeping in sync with normal daily rhythms. When we are out of sync with the normal body rhythms, we may experience discomfort, irritability, sleep disturbances, headaches, constipation, upset stomachs, decreased reaction time, a lack of concentration, decreased motivation, or mild memo-

Ways to develop regularity in your life:

1. Develop regular hours for Bible study, eating, and work.
2. Develop a habit of retiring to bed at a fixed time every night.
3. Have a regular schedule for physical activity each day.
4. As far as possible, avoid delays and minimize interruptions to your normal routine.
5. Celebrate the Sabbath with family and friends each week.

ry loss. Irregular schedules have an effect on our bodies and minds similar to that of jet lag.

Even the small adjustment for daylight savings can have a significant physiological effect. During the week after we turn our clocks forward or backwards by one hour, it is observed that sleep may be disturbed, absenteeism increases in schools and businesses, and auto accidents increase.

We are rhythmic creatures. Our bodies run in cyclical patterns. Therefore, we would do well to have regular hours for the important things in life—sleep, work, eating, physical activity, prayer, and Bible study. This is essential to maintain optimal health. Habits of regularity are associated with improved health and memory, and a better disposition (Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 112).

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