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When You Have **Trouble Waking** Up

Is it so hard to fall asleep you can't wake up in the morning? Here's how to embrace your inner early bird.

By Jennifer Dixon

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Brian Cyphers has always had trouble falling asleep at a "normal" hour. A few years ago, when the 24-year-old Chicagoan was dozing off between 3 and 5 in the morning and had to wake up at 6:30 to get to his job as a data entry clerk at a lab, he knew it was time to seek help.

Cyphers sought assistance from Lisa Shives, MD, medical director of Northshore Sleep Medicine in Evanston, Ill., and a specialist in sleep disorders. Shives frequently sees patients who want to alter their night owl ways. "People can modify their sleep

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patterns, but it's not easy," Shives says. Being a "morning" vs. "night" person is so ingrained in one's nature that Shives sometimes tells late-nighters to seek careers with delayed start times.

Sleep Phase Disorders

The reason Shives' job is so difficult might lie in our genes. Two sleep disorders -- advanced sleep phase syndrome, which causes bedtimes of between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., and delayed sleep phase, where patients fall asleep between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. -- are both often inherited. Advanced sleep phase is less common, affecting less than 1% of middle-aged and older adults. As for delayed sleep phase syndrome, researchers don't know how many people have it, but (to name one group of people) 7% to 16% of young adults do, according to the International Classification of Sleep Disorders.

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The greater incidence of delayed sleep phase may explain why night owls seek help more often than larks -- there are simply more of them. In addition, their shut-eye patterns frequently interrupt normal school or work schedules because their late bedtimes cause difficulty waking up at an appropriate hour.

Beyond genes, sleep patterns are influenced by a strong biological pull. The



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body's circadian rhythm dictates what time a person falls asleep and wakes up, and that can be very difficult to change. "Normally, I can help them a bit," Shives says. "If patients are going to bed at 4 in the morning, I'm not going to get them to 11 p.m. But I can roll them back to 1 or 2 a.m., and that generally makes them pretty happy."

And 1 a.m. to 2 a.m. is Cyphers' new bedtime, too -- not optimal, but an improvement nonetheless. "I don't feel

like I can take on the world every day, but I do feel better," he says. 1 2 View All > NEXT PAGE **TOP PICKS** Why You Snore and How to Stop **Video: Yoga for Better Sleep What's Causing Your Aches? Your Sleep Position and Your** Health What's the Best Sleep Position? 13 Jobs That Can Wreck Your Sleep

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