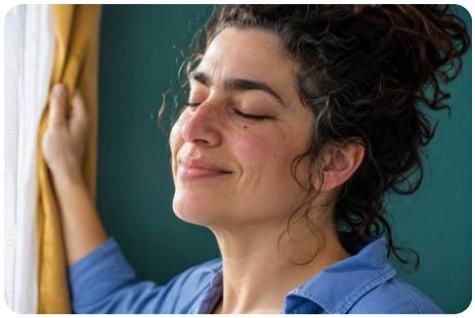
NEWS LESSON

A Body-Clock Link to Some Depression



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What do you think your body clock does?
2. How do you feel after a night of poor sleep?
3. Why might two people with the same illness need different treatments?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**circadian**	☐
2	**genetic**	☐
3	**antidepressants**	☐
4	**findings**	☐
5	**condition**	☐
6	**biological**	☐
7	**psychological**	☐
8	**factors**	☐

A	to do with the body and how living things work
B	things that help to cause something
C	to do with the small parts in your body that you get from your parents
D	the things that people learn from a study
E	to do with the body's natural cycle of about 24 hours
F	medicines that help people who feel very sad for a long time
G	an illness or health problem
H	to do with the mind and feelings

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Scientists in Australia found a group of people with depression whose body clocks may be involved. The study is early, and it is not advice for patients.

1 Some people rise early. Others are wide awake at midnight but feel terrible when the alarm rings. Everyone has a body clock, which helps control when we sleep and wake up. Scientists in Australia have now found evidence that problems with this clock may be connected to a particular type of depression. Their research might help doctors understand why the same treatment does not work for everybody.

2 The University of Sydney announced the findings on 21 October 2026. Researchers studied health and genetic information from more than 10,000 Australians with depression, most of it severe or long-lasting. They identified a group of 2,604 people, nearly one quarter of those studied, whose symptoms suggested what they called circadian depression. The word circadian describes the body's natural cycle over about 24 hours.

3 People in this group often reported sleeping longer when depressed, waking up feeling very tired or having a strong preference for staying up late. Some also had patterns of illness that changed with the seasons. According to what people reported about their own treatment, this type of depression may be less responsive to some common antidepressants. The researchers suggested that treatments that focus on the body clock, such as light therapy or certain medicines, might deserve more attention. This study did not test those treatments.

4 This does not mean that depression is simply a problem of going to bed too late. Depression is a serious condition that can have many causes, including biological, psychological and social factors. Many people have unusual sleeping habits without having depression. Equally, someone with depression does not necessarily have a body-clock problem. The new research helps scientists look more closely at differences between patients.

5 It is also important not to change medical treatment based on a news story. The researchers' findings do not offer a test that everyone can use at home. If a medicine is not working, the safest step is to talk to a qualified doctor rather than stop taking it. Scientists still need to find out which treatments are most helpful and for whom.

6 The bigger message is that one illness can affect people in different ways. Two patients may both feel very low, but their symptoms and their response to treatment may not be the same. Understanding these differences could help doctors offer more personal care in the future. If better questions about sleep and daily routines can improve treatment, perhaps the body clock deserves more attention in mental health conversations.

Sources: The Guardian, Australian researchers identify new subtype of depression linked to body clock disruptions; University of Sydney, Researchers identify new circadian subtype of depression. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The research was announced by the University of Sydney. T F NG
2. Depression is simply a problem of going to bed too late. T F NG
3. Most of the people in the group were teenagers. T F NG
4. If a medicine is not working, people should talk to a doctor. T F NG
5. The study tested treatments for the body clock. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

alarm **connected** **mild** **personal** **rare** **severe** **treatment**

1. The pain was so _____ that she could not go to work.
2. My _____ rings at six every morning, but I always want more sleep.
3. Scientists think the two problems may be _____ to each other.
4. Understanding these differences could help doctors give more _____ care to each patient.
5. The first medicine did not help, so the doctor tried a different _____ .

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The University of Sydney _____ the findings on 21 October 2026. (ANNOUNCE)
2. Researchers _____ health and genetic information from more than 10,000 Australians. (STUDY)
3. They _____ a group of 2,604 people. (IDENTIFY)
4. Two patients may both _____ very low, but their symptoms may not be the same. (FEEL)
5. Scientists still _____ to find out which treatments are most helpful. (NEED)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A collocation is a pair of words that always go together. Learn the pair, not just the word.

habits	heavy	medical	preference	sharp	therapy	wide

1. Some people are _____ awake at midnight but feel terrible in the morning.
2. Doctors might suggest light _____ , but this study did not test it.
3. The doctor asked about her _____ history, including past illnesses.
4. Many people have unusual sleeping _____ without having depression.
5. She has a strong _____ for staying up late.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Are you a morning person or a night person?
2. Why is it a bad idea to change your medicine because of a news story?
3. Who would you talk to if you were worried about your sleep?

9 Role-play: should I stop my medicine?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the doctor

Your patient has read a news story about body clocks and wants to stop their medicine. Ask about their sleep and how they feel. Explain why they shouldn't change anything without advice.

Student B · the patient

You read a story about body clocks and depression. You're worried your medicine isn't working. Explain why you want to stop, and ask the doctor what you can do instead.

Useful phrases

I read a story about body clocks.
I'm thinking of stopping my medicine.
I'd like to understand why it isn't working.
That's an early study, so please don't stop yet.
Let's talk about your sleep first.
What's the safest next step?

Afterwards, tell the class: did the patient decide to keep the medicine, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 E · 2 C · 3 F · 4 D · 5 G · 6 A · 7 H · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 severe · 2 alarm · 3 connected · 4 personal · 5 treatment

6 Verb forms

1 announced · 2 studied · 3 identified · 4 feel · 5 need

7 Language focus

1 wide · 2 therapy · 3 medical · 4 habits · 5 preference

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