

does it really work?

This month: Can a therapeutic lamp help you to get up in the morning?

The Bodyclock is an alarm clock and lamp – designed to regulate your sleep cycle. But can it help self-confessed ‘morning maudlin’ Emma Elms wake up bright and breezy on a dark, winter morning?

The theory

The Bodyclock Advanced aims to relieve the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) which makes sufferers feel low, lethargic or irritable during the winter months. Using your body's natural response to sunrise and sunset, the clock wakes you up with natural light (theoretically revving you up before you're conscious), so you'll bound out of bed like a kid on Christmas Day. At night, it fades slowly to darkness, giving your body the signal to wind down.

The practice

It's no secret that I'm terrible in the morning – I wake up disoriented, grumpy and desperate for more sleep. Like most people, I find it hardest to get up in winter, when it's dark outside – then I only start to feel cheerful and coherent about two hours after waking.

I've never been keen on alarm clocks – the shrill blast from a clock radio makes me dive straight back under the covers, and snooze buttons encourage me to drift back to sleep, then wake up late in a blind panic. And so, enter the Bodyclock Advanced, a clock/lamp combo specifically designed to make getting up just that little bit easier. So, could I wake up feeling like a ‘sunshine person’?



Emma prepares to start the sunset



How am I supposed to sleep with this light on?



Wakey, wakey...



...rise and shine

“I've grown so dependent on the Bodyclock I'm even tempted to take it on holiday with me”

The Bodyclock Advanced uses a 60-watt bulb and allows you to select a 15-, 30-, 60- or 90-minute wake-up time. I opt for the recommended 30 minutes. At 7am, the lamp will start to gradually illuminate while I'm in a blissful slumber, and by the time the alarm (a gentle pipping noise) goes off at 7.30am, I should be raring to go.

There is also a go-to-sleep programme, so, that night, I choose a 30-minute fade down to sunset. I don't usually have

problems dropping off, but when I get into bed at 11.30pm, I realise the Bodyclock could be helpful for insomniacs. As the light fades, I feel myself getting drowsy, idly wondering what the new me will be like in the morning.

But, annoyingly, my eyes spring open at 6am. Subconsciously, I've been worrying the alarm won't go off and I can't get back to sleep, so I feel grumpier than ever. However, at 7.30am, as the alarm sounds, my boyfriend jumps enthusiastically out of bed and bounds across the room. It's clearly worked for him. In fact, he takes a sudden interest in the clock, asking how it works and, most importantly, ‘Can we keep it?’

The next evening, I go out for

drinks after work, and by the time I return home inebriated, I'm ready to crash out in a dark room, so speed up the ‘sunset’. Usually, the added obstacle of a hangover would make it even harder to get out of bed the next morning, but, to my astonishment, I wake up just before the alarm to a subtly lit room, feeling in a good mood. I'm so chirpy I even start chatting animatedly to my boyfriend (morning conversation is normally out of the question) who

stares at me in amazement. Usually, being woken by an alarm clock is like having a glass of water chucked in your face, but with the Bodyclock, it's like being gently stroked into consciousness. By the time I've had breakfast, I feel alert, on-the-ball and ready for the day ahead, quite the opposite to my fuzzy-headed and slightly queasy former self. Travelling on the Tube is a different story, too – when someone grabs the last seat, I don't even bat an eyelid.

A month later

I've grown so dependent on the Bodyclock, I'm even tempted to take it on holiday with me. The ‘sunset’ programme helps me go to sleep more quickly and creates a calming mood. I'm no longer a morning maudlin and wake up feeling far more refreshed, energetic and optimistic. Who knows, I might even start going for a morning jog in the park...■