

Biological Rhythms Explained: Circadian & Ultradian Cycles



Glossary

Biological clock

An internal timing system that regulates biological rhythms.

Circadian rhythm

A biological cycle lasting about 24 hours.

Cortisol

A hormone that promotes alertness, usually peaking before waking.

Endogenous

Originating from within the body.

Exogenous cues

External signals from the environment that influence internal processes (within the body).

Melatonin

A hormone that promotes sleep and regulates the sleep–wake cycle.

NREM sleep

Non-rapid eye movement sleep, includes light to deep stages.

Pineal gland

A small brain structure that produces melatonin.

Sleep-wake cycle

The daily pattern of sleep and wakefulness, part of the circadian rhythm.

Suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN)

A brain structure that detects light levels and regulates melatonin release.

REM sleep

Rapid eye movement sleep, often linked to dreaming.