

## Avoid These Post-5 PM Activities to Lower Alzheimer's Risk Because bedtime habits make a big difference

By [Brina Patel](#) Published on July 18, 2025

Medically reviewed by [Shaheen Lakhan, MD, PhD, FAAN](#)



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How Sleep Promotes Brain Health

The right [evening routines](#) help our minds and bodies relax, thereby allowing us to obtain adequate sleep.

According to [Dr. Chelsie Rohrscheib](#), a neuroscientist, sleep expert, and the head of sleep at Wesper, “Consistent, [good-quality sleep](#) is essential for maintaining brain health and preventing [neurodegeneration](#). This is because sleep accomplishes many biological functions that do not occur during wakefulness.”

[Dr. Kimberly Idoko](#), a board-certified neurologist and Medical Director at Everwell Neuro, says, “The brain uses sleep to clear metabolic waste products via the glymphatic system. Poor evening routines can disrupt sleep, thereby disrupting brain detoxification and increasing neuroinflammation.” Sleep disruptions can also impair [memory consolidation](#) and cell and tissue repair in the brain. Over time, this can contribute to [cognitive decline](#).

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By [Mark Stibich, PhD](#) Updated on February 20, 2024

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People of all ages use brain-training games to [improve mental functioning](#) and [prevent brain aging](#). Backing them up is research showing that brain-training games may help improve attention levels, memory,<sup>1</sup> response time, logic skills, and other measures of cognitive function if played over a long timespan.

The brain is just like a muscle - it thrives on exercise! As a neurologist, I'm thrilled by the incredible potential of brain games to help people flex their mental muscles, activating underused brain circuits to sharpen cognition and skills like focus, speed, and memory.

— [SHAHEEN LAKHAN, MD, PHD, FAAN](#)

From pen-and-paper Sudoku and crosswords to specialized brain training apps, options for brain games are plentiful. To give your brain a workout while having fun, try these games and activities that may improve your [mental focus](#) and fitness.

## [7 Brain Exercises to Strengthen Your Mind](#)

### Sudoku



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[Sudoku](#) is a number placement game that relies on short-term memory. To complete a Sudoku puzzle, you have to look ahead and follow trails of consequences—if you put a 6 in this box, that one must be an 8 and this one a 4, and so on. This type of planning helps [improve short-term memory](#) and concentration.

You can play Sudoku online, on an app, or on paper. Look for a regular Sudoku in your newspaper, buy a book with a collection of puzzles, or download a free app for your phone or tablet.

Sudoku puzzles are available in varying degrees of difficulty. When you're starting out, play the easy games until you learn the rules. If you're playing on paper, use a pencil!

## [Proven Ways to Improve Your Memory](#)

### Lumosity

[Lumosity](#) is one of the most established brain training and mental fitness programs. You can sign up for a free account to play three games per day, or choose the subscription service for more offerings. Either way, you can keep track of your results and improvement.

One recent study showed that participants who played Lumosity's exercises for 15 minutes a day at least seven days a week for three weeks experienced improved attention and motor speed.<sup>1</sup> You can use Lumosity via their website or download the Lumosity app on iOS and Android. Lumosity also has a meditation and mindfulness app called Lumosity Mind.

## [How to Become More Mindful in Your Everyday Life](#)

### Crosswords



Carol Yepes / Getty Images

Crosswords are a classic brain trainer, accessing not only verbal language but memory from many dimensions of knowledge. There are many ways to do crossword puzzles, both online and off. If you receive a daily newspaper, you'll almost always get a crossword there. Or pick up a book of crosswords specifically suited to your skill level and interests.

You will also find many options for crossword puzzles online or via free or inexpensive apps. The AARP website offers a [daily crossword](#) that's free to everyone, whether or not you're a member of the group.

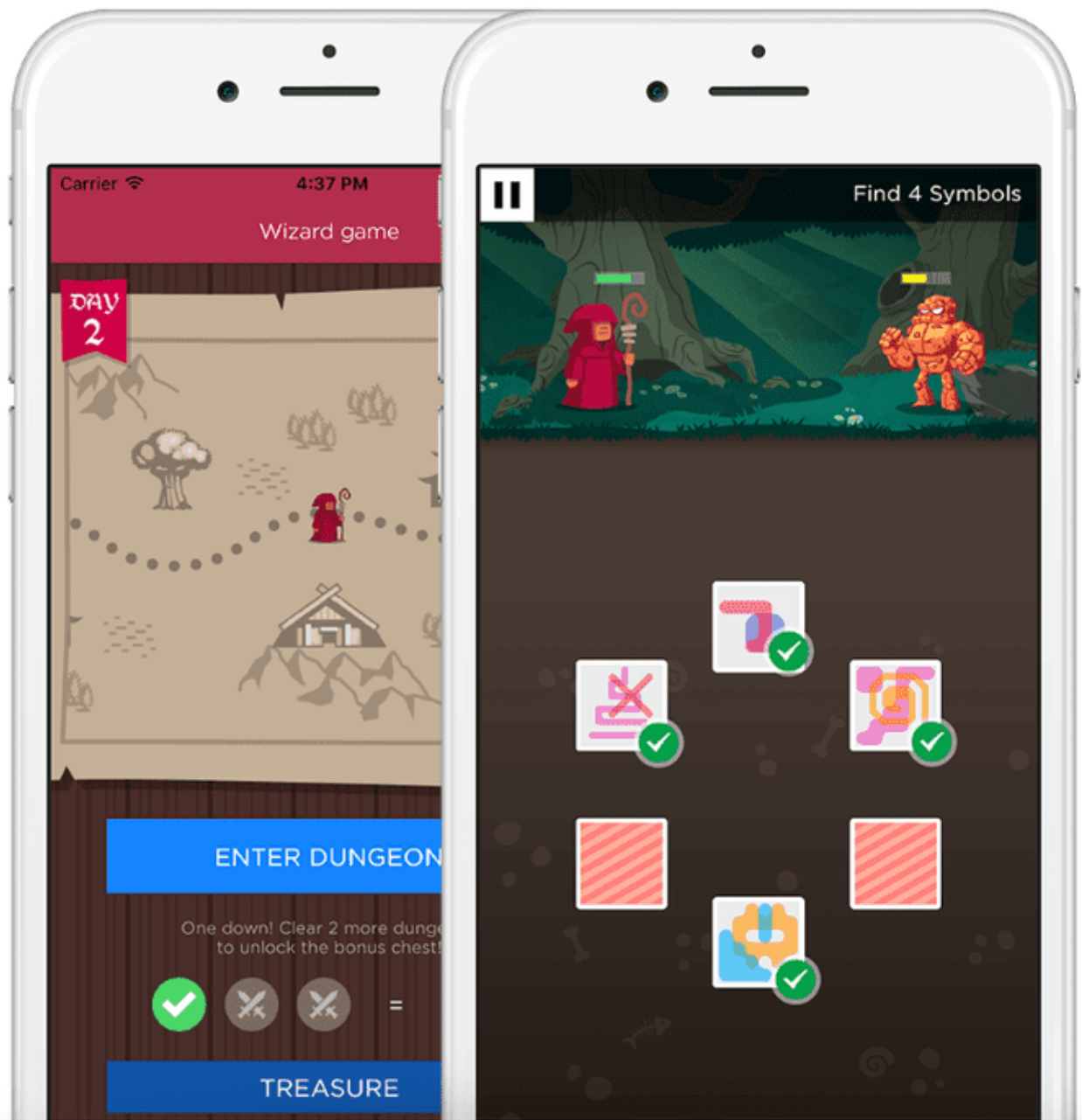
## [7 Brain Exercises to Strengthen Your Mind](#)

### Elevate

Elevate's games center on reading, writing, speaking, and math, and you can customize your training to focus on whichever areas you prefer. As with most other brain games, you can track your progress to see how your skills are improving.

You'll need to download an app to play [Elevate](#)'s 35 (and counting) different brain-training games, which have a strongly educational feel. It's free (with in-app purchases) and both iOS and Android versions have tens of thousands of five-star reviews.

### Peak



Peak.net

[Peak](#) is another app-only option (available for iOS and Android) that provides brain games to help you work on focus, memory, problem-solving, mental agility, and more cognitive functions. If you're a competitive person, you might be motivated by seeing how you perform against other users. The app is free to use, but an inexpensive subscription unlocks more features.

### [At What Age Is Your Brain the Sharpest?](#)

Happy Neuron

[Happy Neuron](#) divides its games and activities into five critical brain areas: memory, attention, language, executive functions, and visual/spatial. Like Lumosity, it personalizes the training to fit you, tracks your progress, and the games are based on scientific research.

You must pay a monthly subscription fee to use the site, and its simplified app version is [available for Android users](#) only. Happy Neuron does, however, offer a free trial offer so you can see if you like the approach.

## Braingle

[< Previously](#) **TRY A BRAIN TEASER!**

### Quiet, Please! Rebus

This list of words reveals a person. Can you figure out who it is?

- Ptarmigan
- Aisle
- Dossier
- Depot
- Column
- Lime
- February

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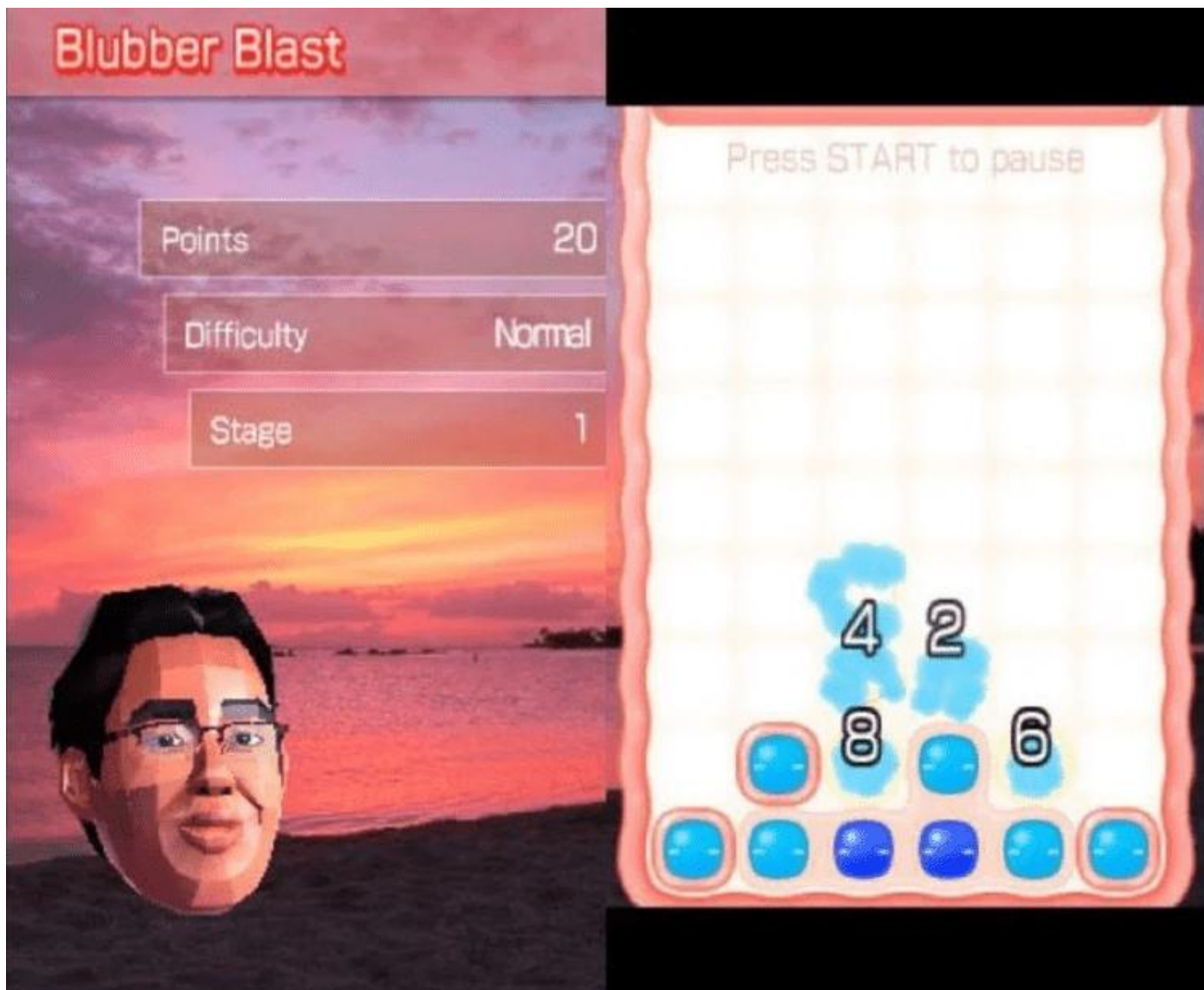
## Braingle

Claiming to have the world's largest collection of brain teasers, [Braingle's free website](#) provides more than 15,000 puzzles, games, and other brain teasers as well as an online community of enthusiasts. You can even create your own puzzles to give your brain a super workout. Braingle has a wide variety of offerings, including optical illusions, codes and ciphers, and trivia quizzes.

## Queendom

[Queendom](#) has thousands of personality tests and surveys. It also has an extensive collection of "brain tools"—including logic, verbal, spatial, and math puzzles; trivia quizzes; and aptitude tests—for you to exercise and test your brain. If you'd like to save results and scores, you'll need a free account. Some tests give you only snapshot results for free, and charge a fee for full reports.

## Brain Age Concentration Training



Brain Age: Concentration Training / Nintendo Life

[Brain Age Concentration Training](#) is a brain training and mental fitness system for the Nintendo 3DS system. It includes a huge number of games to hone your concentration, memory, calculation, and other brain skills. It's fun, portable, and challenging. Brain Age is also available for the Nintendo Wii U, but not for the Switch, Nintendo's most up-to-date gaming system.

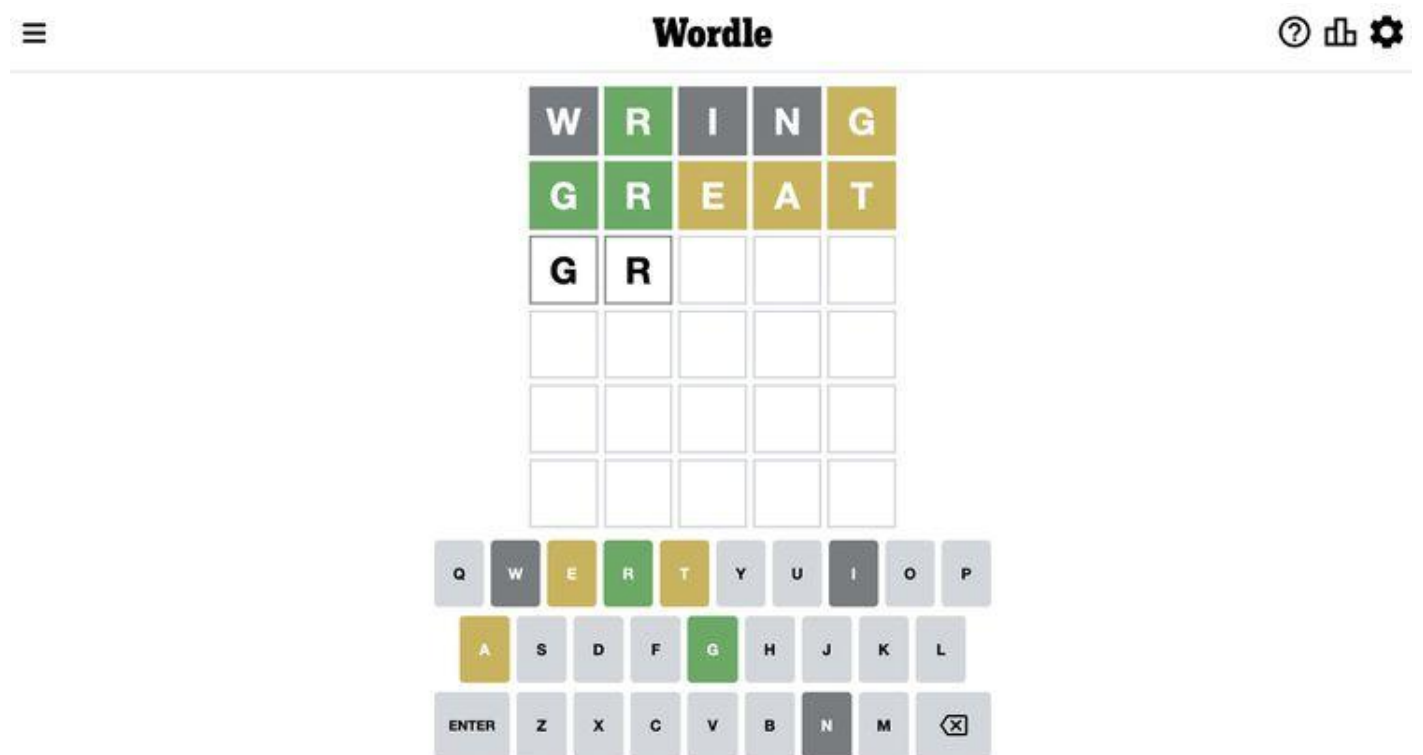
### [What Is Cognitive Training and Does It Work?](#)

My Brain Trainer

[My Brain Trainer](#) calls itself an online "brain gym." It is similar in format to, although less stylish than, Lumosity and Happy Neuron. It's also less expensive; a three-month subscription costs the same as a month on the other services. The annual subscription is an even bigger savings. You can try a challenge for free as well.

This website is full of games, puzzles, and other challenges designed to improve your mental fitness. The website recommends 10 minutes of brain training twice a day for the best effects. It also has a basic training program that claims to improve your mental speed.

Wordle



This web-based puzzle game from The New York Times exploded in popularity in early 2022 and now counts millions of users worldwide. The premise is simple: Users get six tries to guess a five-letter word. [Wordle's](#) combination of problem-solving challenges and easy-to-use interface makes for a satisfying mental workout.

### [10 Best Brain Games to Keep Your Mind Sharp](#)

#### Keep in Mind

Remember, brain training isn't limited to games and puzzles; staying socially engaged, maintaining creative hobbies, and even working out can help to flex your brain and improve cognitive functioning. Find what feels good and works for you.

Make brain training a daily habit and build the mental reserves to delay cognitive decline!  
— SHAHEEN LAKHAN, MD, PHD, FAAN



How to Ditch Poor Sleep Hygiene

Mind Over Mattress Guide

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By [Sanjana Gupta](#) Updated on August 01, 2024

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We often develop sleeping habits and patterns as children, and carry them forward with us over the years. If your sleeping habits are not serving you well, it can be helpful to work on developing healthier sleep patterns, also known as good [sleep hygiene](#), for better sleep.

This article discusses the importance of sleep, how much sleep you need, and some healthy sleep hygiene habits that may help you [sleep better](#).

The Importance of Sleep

We sleep for approximately one-third of our lives. The brain is in fact quite active during sleep, while the body rests and recharges its energy levels.<sup>1</sup>

These are some of the reasons why getting a good night's sleep is important:<sup>2</sup>

- Growth and repair
- Immunity and disease prevention
- Learning, memory, attention, and emotional regulation<sup>3</sup>
- Physical and [mental well-being](#)

Furthermore, lack of adequate sleep is linked to several negative outcomes, including:<sup>4</sup>

- Obesity<sup>5</sup>
- Diabetes<sup>6</sup>
- Hypertension<sup>7</sup>
- Heart disease<sup>8</sup>
- Lower immunity and greater susceptibility to infections<sup>9</sup>
- Reduced cognitive function<sup>3</sup>
- Mood disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and [anger issues](#)<sup>10</sup>
- Alzheimer's disease and dementia<sup>11</sup>
- Vehicular and workplace accidents<sup>12</sup>

### [The Best Sleep Apps, According to a Therapist](#)

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

The amount of sleep we need can vary depending on our age. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists the amount of sleep we need, by age:<sup>13</sup>

- Newborns (0 to 3 months old): 14 to 17 hours of sleep per day (including naps)
- Infants (4 to 12 months old): 12 to 16 hours of sleep per day (including naps)
- Toddlers (1 to 2 years old): 11 to 14 hours of sleep per day (including naps)
- Preschoolers (3 to 5 years old): 10 to 13 hours of sleep per day (including naps)
- School-age children (6 to 12 years old): 9 to 12 hours of sleep per day
- Teenagers (13 to 18 years old): 8 to 10 hours of sleep per day

- Adults (19 to 60 years old): 7 or more hours of sleep per day
- Adults (61 to 64 years old): 7 to 9 hours of sleep per day
- Adults (65 years and above): 7 to 8 hours of sleep per day

## [Theories on Why We Sleep](#)

### Healthy Sleep Hygiene Habits

These are some [healthy sleep hygiene habits](#) that can help you get better sleep:

- Plan for adequate sleep: Try to go to sleep approximately 8 hours before you need to start the next day.
- Maintain a consistent routine: Wake up and go to bed at the same time every day. Try and maintain this consistency on weekends as well. This can help set your [internal clock](#), also known as your circadian rhythm.
- Create a comfortable environment: Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and at a temperature you're comfortable in. Blackout curtains, heavy drapes, or an eye mask can help block out light, whereas earplugs can help block out noise.
- Use your bed exclusively for sleeping: Avoid using your bed for other activities such as working or eating, to maintain the association that this space is only for sleeping.
- Put away electronic devices: Avoid using electronic devices such as your cellphone, computer, tablet, television, and gaming console at least 30 minutes before you [go to sleep](#).
- Nap early in the afternoon: If napping is part of your daily routine, take a quick nap early in the afternoon. Avoid napping late in the afternoon or in the evening. If you're having difficulty falling asleep at night, napping could be the culprit, so it may be helpful to skip your nap altogether.
- Do something relaxing before bedtime: Find a calming activity to do before you go to sleep, such as taking a warm bath, reading a book, listening to soothing music, doing a few [gentle stretches](#), meditating, or doing a relaxation exercise. Avoid stressful discussions or strenuous activities right before you go to bed. Don't let yourself engage in [revenge bedtime procrastination](#).
- Note your worries in a journal: If you're unable to sleep because you're stressed out, it can be helpful to write down your worries in a journal before you go to bed. Transferring your thoughts to paper can help you clear your mind and go to sleep.
- Don't watch the clock: If you're [unable to sleep](#), avoid watching the clock. Stressing yourself out about how late it is can make it harder for you to fall asleep. Engage in a relaxing activity instead, or try moving to another location in your home.
- Avoid caffeine in the evening: Caffeine is a stimulant that can make it hard for you to sleep. It can be found in tea, coffee, sodas, energy drinks, and chocolate, among other

things. It is best avoided four to six hours before bedtime. If you drink a lot of caffeine, gradually cut back on your intake.

- **Limit alcohol and nicotine consumption:** Alcohol and nicotine are also stimulants, and should be avoided too close to bedtime. While [alcohol](#) can help you fall asleep initially, it can act as a stimulant a few hours after you go to sleep, which can affect the quality of your sleep or cause you to wake up earlier than you normally would. Limit your alcohol consumption to one or two drinks per day, preferably consumed three hours before you go to sleep.
- **Eat a light dinner:** Try and eat your dinner at least two hours before you go to bed. Avoid heavy meals and foods that give you indigestion.
- **Regulate your fluid intake:** Drink enough water to ensure that you're sufficiently hydrated and won't wake up at night thirsty, but not so much that you wake up to use the bathroom.
- **Exercise regularly:** Staying active and getting some exercise during the day can help you get a good night's sleep. Try to walk or exercise for at least 30 minutes per day.
- **Seek help if you need it:** If you have insomnia, if you're up at night with sad or anxious thoughts, or if you're not able to sleep well despite your best efforts, it can be helpful to visit a healthcare provider for [treatment](#). Conditions like sleep apnea, narcolepsy, and restless leg syndrome may be the reason why you're having difficulty sleeping.

### [The Military Sleep Method: Benefits and How It Works](#)

#### Bottom Line

Sleep is an important aspect of staying mentally and physically healthy. If you haven't slept well, you may notice that you don't feel good, your energy levels are lower, you're unable to concentrate, you're cranky and irritable, you find it harder to deal with [stressors](#), and you're more prone to catching a cold or falling ill.

Maintaining good sleep hygiene can help you relax and get a good night's sleep. Performing a soothing bedtime routine can be a [self-care activity](#) that you do for yourself.

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By [Sanjana Gupta](#)

Sanjana is a health writer and editor. Her work spans various health-related topics, including mental health, fitness, nutrition, and wellness.



- **5 Dietary and Lifestyle Choices to Avoid After 5 PM**

### 5 Dietary and Lifestyle Choices to Avoid After 5 PM

Here are some of the biggest culprits for a restless night.

#### Poor Sleep Hygiene

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, adults should aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Those who sleep less than seven hours per night may experience more health issues than those who regularly sleep seven hours or more.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, certain evening habits can be detrimental to our sleep. Rohrschieb says these can include keeping an [inconsistent sleep schedule](#), sleeping in a poor environment (too noisy, too hot, too much light), [using screens before bed](#), and taking daily stressors to bed.

#### Alcohol

Many of us reach for a nightcap, but it's wise to think twice before pouring that glass. While alcohol may allow us to fall asleep faster, it disrupts the high-quality, [restorative sleep](#) our body needs. According to Rohrschieb, this can lead to frequent awakenings and bathroom trips.

A 2024 study in *Sleep* found that alcohol consumption before bed decreased the amount of [REM \(rapid eye movement\) sleep](#) individuals received.<sup>2</sup> This sleep stage, in which dreaming occurs, plays an important role in [memory consolidation and cognition](#).<sup>3</sup>

## Caffeine

Many of us drink [caffeinated beverages](#) earlier in the day to improve alertness and focus. However, grabbing a cup of coffee too close to bedtime can wreak havoc on our sleep. “Caffeine blocks a chemical called adenosine that promotes sleepiness,” says Idoko. This can make it hard to fall or stay asleep, leaving us groggy and unrested the next day.

Adenosine plays a significant role in cognitive health. According to a 2023 study in *Neuropharmacology*, this chemical regulates learning, cognition, the sleep-wake cycle, and neuromodulation, all of which are affected in Alzheimer’s and dementia.<sup>4</sup>

“Avoid caffeine and other stimulants within six hours of your bedtime,” Rohrschieb advises. Individual tolerance levels will vary, so listen to your body to determine when your ideal caffeine cut-off time might be.

## Fatty and/or Spicy Foods

Ever eat a burger before bed and instantly regret it? Our favorite indulgences might be satisfying in the moment, but they can mess with our sleep if eaten too close to bedtime.

“Eating foods that are too heavy, fatty, or spicy can lead to indigestion and heartburn,” Rohrschieb says.

The relationship between sleep disturbances and chronic heartburn, also known as gastroesophageal reflux (GERD), is a two-way street. GERD can disrupt our sleep, while this sleep deprivation can then exacerbate GERD, resulting in a vicious cycle.<sup>5</sup>

## High-Glycemic Foods

A food’s glycemic index (GI) predicts how quickly its carbohydrates will be digested and absorbed in the bloodstream. High-GI foods (white bread, white rice, sugary beverages) are digested more quickly and therefore lead to rapid blood sugar spikes. Low-GI foods (leafy greens, whole grains, legumes) are digested more slowly, leading to a less pronounced effect on blood sugar.<sup>6</sup>

High-GI foods, Rohrschieb says, “cause a fast spike in blood sugar, followed by a crash, [which] can lead to awakenings due to mid-sleep hypoglycemia.”

## Positive Lifestyle Habits for Brain Health

Supporting our brain health before bedtime, according to Idoko, starts with adopting “an evening wind-down routine that is [calming to the nervous system](#).” This allows us to let go of our daily

worries and stressors so we can relax and ease into a restful slumber. Idoko recommends dimming lights, engaging in some light stretching, meditating or practicing [deep breathing](#), and/or reading a physical book.

Instead of alcohol or caffeine, Rohrschieb suggests mixing up a mocktail or enjoying herbal tea. These beverages can still satisfy that need for a bedtime drink without compromising our sleep architecture.

The foods we eat matter, too. High-fiber, high-protein foods can keep our blood sugar stable throughout the night, Rohrschieb says, which can reduce hypoglycemia risk. It's also important to keep it light and avoid overeating. Furthermore, the foods we eat throughout the day play a role in our overall health. A balanced diet can help stave off a variety of health problems, including Alzheimer's and dementia.

Additionally, Rohrschieb recommends incorporating the following into our day:

- **Daily exercise:** Not only does regular physical activity benefit our body, it also has profound effects on our brain. Physically active adults are less likely to develop cognitive decline compared to those who are physically inactive.<sup>7</sup> Aim for about 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week. Do be mindful of avoiding exercise too close to bedtime, though, as this can also make it difficult to fall or stay asleep.
- **Mental tasks:** Keeping the brain active and challenged can potentially prevent cognitive impairment. Consider completing crossword puzzles, reading, playing games, or engaging in a creative hobby (crocheting, painting, writing).
- **Regular socializing:** Social isolation can increase the risk of developing dementia, according to the Alzheimer's Society.<sup>8</sup> It's important to maintain supportive connections with loved ones and our communities. Call a friend, attend a yoga class, or join a local group for your favorite hobby.

#### Key Takeaways

- Get enough sleep and maintain a healthy lifestyle overall to prevent Alzheimer's and dementia.
- Avoid coffee and other stimulants within six hours of your bedtime.
- Our [bedtime habits](#) can set us up for either a restful or a restless night of sleep, which can then impact our brain health.
- **Positive Lifestyle Habits for Brain Health**

## Mindful Meditation to Find Your Most Energetic Breath

**Our habits** — whether or not we exercise, eat well, or get enough sleep — play a pivotal role in preventing health issues. The right evening habits in particular can positively affect our brain health, which can reduce our [risk of conditions such as dementia and Alzheimer's](#) (a form of dementia). Let's take a look at what we can do — and avoid — before bed in order to keep our brain in top shape.

### **How Sleep Promotes Brain Health**

The right [evening routines](#) help our minds and bodies relax, thereby allowing us to obtain adequate sleep. According to [Dr. Chelsie Rohrscheib](#), a neuroscientist, sleep expert, and the head of sleep at Wesper, “Consistent, [good-quality sleep](#) is essential for maintaining brain health and preventing [neurodegeneration](#). This is because sleep accomplishes many biological functions that do not occur during wakefulness.”

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By [Brina Patel](#)

Brina Patel is a writer from Sacramento, California. Prior to writing full-time, she worked as an applied behavior analysis therapist for children on the autism spectrum. She leverages her own experiences researching emotions, as well as her personal challenges with chronic illness and anxiety, in her storytelling, with the hope of inspiring others to take better charge of their overall wellness and understand themselves on a deeper level.