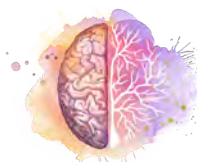




# BRAIN BOOSTING MORNING ROUTINE

**8 Simple Habits for Optimal Brain Health**



ALZHEIMER'S  
THE SCIENCE OF PREVENTION

# BRAIN BOOSTING MORNING ROUTINE

## 8 Simple Habits for Optimal Brain Health

At Alzheimer's - The Science of Prevention, we love brain health. And one of the best ways to look after your brain is a great morning routine. We've put together this guide with some of the best steps for a brain-boosting morning plan. A healthy brain is your most valuable asset, so start using these 8 simple strategies for better brain health today, and let us know how it goes!



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### SLEEP

No, it's not a mistake! Sleep takes the top slot on our brain-boosting morning routine for a very good reason. If you're not prioritizing 7-8 hours of sleep routinely, you're missing out on one of the best strategies for brain health. Yes, that means your morning routine actually starts the **night before**. Why is sleep so critical? Sleep is the time when your brain not only rests, but cleans house, and assimilates and integrates new information. Your "glymphatic system" is responsible for cleaning out the waste that builds up throughout the day, and it becomes especially active during sleep. This is the same waste that has been linked to Alzheimer's disease.<sup>1</sup> We will learn more about sleep as it relates to Alzheimer's prevention in episode 10 of *Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention*.

So how do you prioritize good sleep?

First and foremost, try to make sure to keep both a regular bedtime and waking schedule most days. Next, do what you can to make your bedroom a "sleep sanctuary." This means minimizing electronic devices in the bedroom, keeping the room cooler at night, and reducing unnecessary light that can throw off your circadian rhythm. You can also consider taking a hot bath or shower before bed, as this may (paradoxically) promote cooling of your core temperature and help get your brain and body ready for a good night of sleep. Lastly, consider avoiding caffeine in the afternoon (after ~2pm). Even if you're able to fall asleep after that after-dinner espresso, your actual quality of sleep may suffer.

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### READING

Unlike the winding down that helps your brain prepare for sleep, engaging your brain with mentally stimulating activities in the morning is a wonderful way to kickstart a brain-healthy day. It turns out that activities as simple as reading or a crossword puzzle also carry with them some amazing cognitive benefits. In fact, in one study, researchers found that individuals who engaged in more frequent cognitive activities had a slower rate of cognitive decline.<sup>2</sup> But why does reading help keep your brain healthy? It likely has to do with what's called "cognitive reserve"—the resiliency that some individuals build up over a lifetime of participating in activities that challenge the brain to learn and adapt, such as education, occupational achievement and... yes, reading!

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### BRAIN HEALTHY BREAKFAST

A brain-nourishing meal is an important part of a plan for long-term brain health. But don't be fooled! Many of the foods advertised as "healthy breakfast" options are rich in added sugar and processed carbohydrates which makes them high in calories but low in key nutrients your brain needs to thrive (eating these types of foods may in fact be a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease).<sup>3,4</sup>

Instead, "break fast" on foods that are rich in protein, healthy fat, and pre and probiotics. This will do wonders to help keep your blood sugar under control, keep you energetic throughout the day, and provide your brain with the nutrients it needs to function optimally.<sup>5,6</sup> Some of our favorite brain healthy breakfast foods include low sugar smoothies, berries with probiotic yogurt (from the milk of your choice), and sautéed green vegetables with avocado. We will learn more about diet as it relates to Alzheimer's prevention in episode 6 of *Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention*.

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### MEDITATION & BREATHING

Modern humans are more stressed than ever. Stress (especially chronic stress) plays an obvious role in our quality of life. Yet this same stress also affects the health and longevity of our brains and even our risk for developing Alzheimer's disease.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately for us, stress comes in many forms and is often unavoidable. But while we may never be able to remove all the stressors in our lives, there are meaningful things we can do to lessen their grip on our bodies and brains.

Over the decades, researchers have demonstrated that a number of different techniques can help to offset stress. This means there are lots of ways to experiment with a morning stress-relieving routine. If you don't already have one you like, we recommend trying a meditation, a deep breathing exercise, stretching or another stress management activity of your choice, for a minimum of 10-20 minutes each morning. Whatever you choose, try to find something you look forward to doing every day, and something you can easily build into your daily routine. Ideally, this means the same time and place every day, since it's repetitions of the same tasks in the same ways that teach the brain new habits. Remember, beyond the effects on stress, these same practices have also been linked to improved mood, memory, and concentration. For more ideas on how to reduce stress and your risk for Alzheimer's disease make sure to tune in for episode 8 of *Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention*.

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### COFFEE & TEA

In addition to being a part of the morning routine for most Americans, coffee also has surprising benefits for your brain! Research has shown that coffee consumption is associated with a significant reduction in risk for Alzheimer's disease. In one such study, 3-5 cups of coffee per day was associated with a 65% reduced risk of dementia and Alzheimer's later in life.<sup>8</sup> So what is it about coffee that is good for the brain? Some research suggests that certain compounds found in coffee may protect the brain by blocking a buildup of proteins associated with Alzheimer's disease. Coffee consumption is also linked to a reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes, one of the main risk factors for Alzheimer's.<sup>9</sup>

The brain benefits of coffee may come on quicker than you think. In terms of its immediate effects on the brain, coffee consumption may improve memory performance.<sup>10</sup> Overall for those who can tolerate consumption of coffee in moderation, it seems to be a solid addition to a daily brain health routine. One word of caution, however: since coffee contains caffeine be sure to wrap up your coffee consumption by noon – 2pm to protect your sleep quality. If you don't handle caffeine well, then decaf coffee is still packed with a number of ingredients linked to better long-term brain health. You can also try caffeine-free herbal teas like hibiscus, chamomile, and ginger. For more information on the wonderful brain benefits of coffee please take a look at these blogs by Dr. David Perlmutter, the host of *Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention*.



[Coffee – Good for Your Brain!](#)

[Coffee – A Healthy Choice](#)

[Coffee Can Save Your Brain](#)



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### MOVEMENT

We're all aware that movement is good for the body, but we're now learning that physical activity is in fact one of the most impactful activities available when it comes to caring for our brains. Whether it's walking your dog, a structured exercise class, or simple jogging, morning is one of the best times to get your daily dose of exercise. It's important to know that you don't have to run a marathon to reap these brain-benefits! Rather, a 2019 study showed that just 20 minutes of aerobic exercise per day is enough to help stave off premature brain aging.<sup>11</sup> That's right, studies have shown that just moving your body may indeed help protect against Alzheimer's disease.<sup>12</sup> As before, consistency is key. That means it's important to pick an activity that you enjoy so you will stick with it. Finally, a great way to incorporate movement into your mornings is to find a partner to move with! Make sure to tune in for episode 9 of *Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention* where we will learn all about the brain boosting benefits of exercise.

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### SUNLIGHT EXPOSURE

Here's a powerful bit of brain trivia: when you get morning sunlight in your eyes, it stops the release of melatonin in your brain and helps regulate your circadian rhythm.<sup>13</sup> Here's how to take advantage of this powerful science. In the first 30 minutes after you wake, try to walk outside or go to an open window for some direct sunlight (but don't look directly at the sun!).<sup>14</sup> Getting a bit of light in your eyes will help you maintain a healthy sleep/wake cycle. But why exactly is this? More science trivia! When the sun is at a low angle in the morning sky, the contrast between yellow and blue wavelengths of light is greatest, which is what tells specific neurons in your retina (eye) to set your biological clock. The simple act of allowing your eyes to pick up on this morning sunlight will help keep your biological clock anchored and maintain the healthy sleep/wake cycle which is critical for long-term brain function.



#### ADVANCED TIP:

If you go for a walk outside, with a cup of coffee in the morning for a bit of sunlight, you're hitting 3 of our top tips at once!

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### SUPPLEMENTS

While getting nutrients through diet should always be a top priority, many choose to consume supplements as part of a brain-healthy morning routine. A variety of supplements have been linked to improved brain function. Some of these include the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA<sup>15</sup>, Vitamin D<sup>16</sup>, curcumin<sup>17</sup>, probiotics<sup>18</sup>, prebiotic fiber<sup>19</sup> and a select few others. Note that a few of these supplements are fat soluble (for example, vitamin D), so consuming them with a breakfast rich in healthy fat may help with absorption. In episode 12 of *Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention* we will cover supplements in depth and learn all about which are evidence based and good for your brain!

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### LOOKING FOR MORE TIPS?

In Alzheimer's, the Science of Prevention, we'll be going into detail on all of these topics and much more. To hear our globally recognized brain health experts reveal their knowledge on the best steps to take to keep your brain in top shape now and into old age, make sure to tune in!





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### SOURCES

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