

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Brain Health Matters and Time Change and Sleep Make a Difference

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Today, the BHI is talking about how the changing seasons can impact our sleep and brain health.*

As Bob Dylan sang, ‘for the times they are a-changin’. We’ve all noticed that the days are getting shorter and this Sunday, November 1, daylight saving time ends in Florida. Setting our clocks back an hour means our sleep schedule is going to be disrupted for a few nights and days as we adjust to the time change.

Dr. Stephanie Peabody, founder and executive director of the BHI, shares: “There is a strong connection between getting a good night’s sleep and our brain health. A healthy sleep routine — going to bed at the same time and waking up at the same time every morning — helps keep our circadian rhythms in line and produces the proteins our brains need to stay healthy.”

Changing our clocks, even by just one hour, impacts our sleep routine. While “falling back” may be easier than “springing forward,” our new earlier bedtime may cause some of us to have difficulty falling asleep, experiencing increased wakefulness during the early part of the night or waking up too early in the morning.

According to Brain Health Initiative colleague Dr. Michael Breus, [\*The Sleep Doctor\*](#), moving our clocks interrupts the main cue for our daily sleep cycle — light. It also resets our circadian rhythm, putting our internal clock out of sync with our day-night cycle. He says it usually takes about one day to adjust to the one-hour time change, but the adjustment is different for each of us. Getting enough sleep and maintaining a regular schedule for optimal circadian rhythm health is a challenge for most of us, including our youth, but healthy sleep habits can make the difference.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

The Brain Health Initiative agrees with the work of the Sleep Matters Initiative at Brigham Health, a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital in Boston, MA, and offers these tips for [healthy sleep habits](#) that can make the difference between restlessness and a good night's sleep.

- **Avoid caffeine, alcohol, nicotine.** Many chemicals interfere with sleep.
- **Create a sleep-inducing bedroom.** Quiet, dark, cool and comfortable are the key ingredients.
- **Establish a soothing pre-sleep routine.** Ease the transition from wake time to sleep time with a period of relaxing activities an hour or so before bed.
- **Go to bed when you're tired.** If you're struggling to fall asleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel tired.
- **Don't watch the clock.** Staring at the clock can increase stress and make it harder to fall asleep. If you wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep in about 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel tired. But keep the lights dim; bright light can stimulate your internal clock.
- **Use the light.** Natural light keeps your internal clock on a healthy sleep-wake cycle.
- **Set your internal clock.** Going to bed and waking up the same time each day sets the body's "internal clock" to expect sleep at a certain time night after night.
- **If you nap, nap early.** If falling asleep or staying asleep is a problem for you, avoid napping after 3 p.m. Late-day naps decrease sleep drive.
- **Avoid late-night eating.** Finish dinner several hours before bedtime and avoid foods that cause indigestion. If you get hungry at night, snack on foods that in your experience won't disturb your sleep.
- **Balance fluid intake.** Drink enough to avoid waking up thirsty but not so much that you wake up for a trip to the bathroom.
- **Exercise early.** Exercise stimulates the production of cortisol, which helps keep the brain alert. Try to finish exercising at least three hours before bed.
- And finally, **adopt a brain healthy lifestyle**, including thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote:
  - Stress resilience
  - Nutrition
  - Physical activity
  - Sleep
  - Social connection
  - Emotional wellbeing
  - Meaning and Purpose
  - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
  - Engaging with nature
  - General health
  - Positive impacts

## **About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI works collaboratively with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).