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The surprising impact of leisure activities on cognitive function

How you choose to spend your downtime could significantly influence your long-term brain health, say researchers from the University of South Australia (UniSA). A study assessing the 24-hour activity patterns of 397 older adults (aged 60 and above) found that not all sedentary activities are equal for cognitive function. Mentally stimulating or social activities like reading, crafting or chatting with others boost memory and thinking, while TV and video games may be detrimental. With dementia affecting 411,100 Australians and more than 55 million globally, the study highlights that swapping less stimulating sedentary behaviours for engaging ones can reduce dementia risks. UniSA's Dr Maddison Mellow emphasises that physical activity remains crucial, but even small changes, like breaking up a TV binge with a quick walk or some reading, can benefit brain health. Prioritising movement and cognitive engagement helps protect memory and thinking abilities, especially during festive indulgences.

Source: The Journals of Gerontology.