KEEPING THE BRAIN IN BALANCE

The brain is the organ most associated with intelligence and common sense. So, it stands to reason that taking good care of it should be a high priority. March hosts international Brain Awareness Week, which is designed to foster enthusiasm for the support of brain science and understanding how it works.

Why brain health is important

"Many people don't start thinking about their brain health until they notice some cognitive changes and memory loss in their 60s or 70s," warns associate professor of neuropsychology at Columbia University, Elise Caccappolo. "But there are many things you can do, starting as young as childhood, to keep your brain as healthy as possible throughout your lifetime."

Switch it off for better results

WebMD suggests that for the brain to function optimally, it needs to be switched off daily for seven to nine hours at a time (when you sleep). "New research shows that during sleep, the brain clears out toxins called beta-amyloids that can lead to Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia."

Give your brain a workout

Exercise sends fresh oxygen to the brain and "spurs the development of new nerve cells and increases the connections between brain cells (synapses)", according to Harvard Health. It also lowers cholesterol and blood pressure, which will probably also benefit your brain somewhere along the line.

Buy brain food

Medical News Today explains that the brain is an "energy-intensive organ" because it uses up around 20 per cent of the body's kilojoules. This means whatever the quality of the fuel you take in can have a direct impact on your brain. So, you should avoid sugary, fried and processed food and rather opt for the following options as suggested by Medical News Today:

Oily fish – It's a fantastic source of omega 3 fatty acids, which help improve the structure of the brain's cells.

Dark chocolate – It contains antioxidants called flavonoids, which seems to be good for neuron and blood vessel growth.

Berries – Also packed with brain-loving antioxidants. Improves circulation, reduces inflammation and may even delay age-related neurodegenerative conditions.

Nuts and seeds – Antioxidants, vitamin E and omega 3 fatty acid make these foods particularly good for a brain boosting snack.