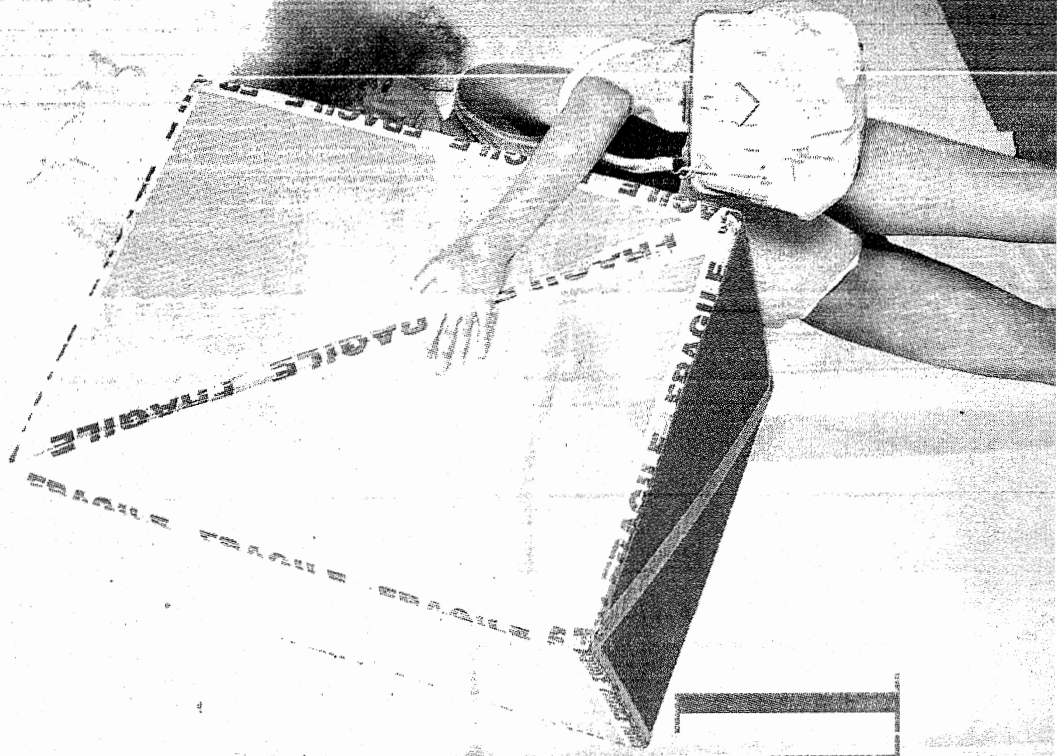


LIFE IS SO BUSY  
THESE DAYS IT'S NOT  
UNUSUAL FOR YOUR  
MEMORY TO SUFFER,  
BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE  
TO BE THAT WAY.

HERE'S HOW TO  
BOOST YOUR BRAIN  
POWER. BY BRONWYN  
MCNUITY.

# A Beautiful MIND



**W**ork and family commitments, bills, car registration, pet vaccinations... there's a lot to remember in a life today. And that's before you have kids. Add a couple of sprogs to the equation and nappies, packed lunches and school excursions threaten to bring your memory crashing on a regular basis.

Is it possible that your mind is starting to fail you when even middle age is still a fair way off? It is possible, according to the experts, but not likely. Professor Michael Humphreys, a professor of psychology at the University of Queensland, says the older people get, the more they worry about losing their memory. "But the decline is really quite slow," he says. "There are all sorts of reasons that memory is bad, but for many of us it's simply that we aren't paying attention."

While a rapid decline in memory could be a preclinical sign of dementia, Professor Humphreys says dementia is not prevalent before the age of 60, and still low then. Other culprits that can affect memory quality include brain trauma, some medications and depression. But by and large, most of us are worrying unnecessarily when we think our memory is fading all too soon.

"It's easy to improve learning - take more time and more trouble," says Professor Humphreys. "If you want to remember something, say, someone's name at a cocktail party, pay attention, use it and think about it. Memory loss doesn't appear to be inevitable."

Dr Anthony Hannan, head of the Neural Plasticity Group at Melbourne's Howard Florey Institute, is conducting research into how maintaining mental and physical activity and a healthy diet could slow brain ageing and delay the onset of brain disorders like dementia. "Physical activity and a healthy diet have multiple benefits, as they appear to also protect against disorders such as heart disease,

### tip #1

**Summarise. If you're seeing a professional for advice, a doctor, accountant or financial planner, for example, interrupt them periodically and summarise the advice they are giving you. "The act of talking about it puts it in your memory," says Sunday.**

diabetes and some cancers," he says.

Nina Sunday, managing director of memory trainers Brainpower Training, says that unless you engage in a process of learning to shift information from the primary, or short-term memory to the secondary, or long-term memory, it is normal to forget more than you remember.

"Age doesn't have to impair memory," she says. "Most people just need good strategies for remembering. If you're preoccupied when you put your keys down, you may forget where you put them, so you need to be organised, and put them in the same place every time."

Some 90-year-olds have perfect memories, says Dr Marie Gibbs, from Melbourne's Monash University. "Memory deterioration varies, and depends on the amount of stress in your life," she says. Also, as we get older and life gets busier, she says it just gets harder to remember everything you are trying to remember. Doing things that interest you to keep your brain active is the key to warding off memory deterioration.

"Doing crosswords, reading and hobbies all increase the number of brain neuromodulators, the transmitters that determine whether something is remembered or not."

**tip #3 Employ dialogue. "Verbally recite information after you have learnt it, from memory," says Sunday. "The act of reciting shifts the information from the primary [short-term] memory to the secondary [long-term] memory."**

**Forgot to put your pants on and can't find your apartment? If your memory is causing you grief, start exercising your brain.**

### tip #2

**Use memory hooks, such as colour. "Students, for example, should have a set of coloured biro's, and if today's lecture notes were taken down in green, tomorrow's in red and the next day's in purple, the colour becomes a trigger for the information," says Sunday.**

## SUPPLEMENTS

**Naturopath Cassie Hendy, from Swisse Vitamins, says the brain's capacity can be diminished through poor nutrition.**

**"The brain requires energy and nutrients to function properly," she says. "Ensuring you have a well-balanced diet and taking a natural supplement can enhance short-term memory and mental performance."**

**Hendy recommends Swisse Clinicals CereX to aid memory function and stamina.**

**"CereX incorporates numerous herbs, vitamins, minerals, amino acids and other nutrients that are essential for optimum brain function," she says.**

**IQlect is another supplement that claims to improve memory and assist learning. It contains bacopa monniera, an Ayurvedic herb used to assist memory, Siberian ginseng and Spanish sage.**