

# Brain awareness

## *The Health Column*

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This year, Brain Awareness Week is taking place on the 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> March. Brain Awareness Week is a global campaign to increase public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research, and unites the efforts of organisations worldwide in celebrating the brain for people of all ages.

In Australia, the Brain Foundation is a charity that is dedicated to funding research around the country into neurological disorders, brain disease and brain injuries. This research aims to advance diagnoses, treatment and patient outcomes.

The brain is a large and complex organ, and is made up of more than 100 billion nerves communicating in numerous connections called synapses. Different parts of the brain work together, and control numerous aspects of daily living, including breathing, sleep, coordination and balance.

According to the Brain Foundation, there are a wide number of conditions, diseases and injuries classified as 'brain disorders'. These conditions include Alzheimer's disease, autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, migraine, multiple sclerosis, and many others. Brain disease and injury affects millions of Australians and their loved ones.

The Brain Foundation also runs the Healthy Brain Program, which aims to assist Australians to keep their brains healthy into old age through providing community education and research. As people are living longer, the prevalence of degenerative brain disorders is increasing. This program aims to increase community awareness of the potential for improving long term brain health through lifestyle changes and risk reduction, promote the recognition of risk reduction strategies, and motivate changes to develop a healthy brain lifestyle. Some pointers to a healthy brain include:

- Exercise and challenge your brain
- Nourish your brain with a healthy diet and drink alcohol in moderation
- Enjoy physical activity
- Make 'safety first' a priority (head trauma is the silent epidemic)
- Learn to manage stress and depression



- Relax and sleep well
- Have regular checks for blood pressure, diabetes, heart rate, cholesterol
- Do not smoke or use illegal drugs

For Brain Awareness Week this year, the Brain Foundation is inviting Australians to host a 'Big Trivia', and help Australians with brain disease and injury. This is a great opportunity to gather your family and friends, test your brain power and raise money for brain research. It is easy to host your trivia event – information on how to host the event, access to trivia questions and answers, invitations and promotional material, as well as other resources are available. For more information visit: <https://bigtrivia.org.au/>

Your local pharmacy is your health destination, and is here to assist you with your everyday health needs. Pharmacies that provide the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care health information can provide Self Care Fact Cards on a wide variety of health topics, including brain conditions. Available Fact Cards include those titled *Alzheimer's disease*, *Epilepsy*, *Migraine*, and many others. Ask your pharmacist about information that may be relevant to you.

For the nearest Self Care pharmacy location phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772, or go to [www.psa.org.au/selfcare](http://www.psa.org.au/selfcare), then click 'Find a *Self Care pharmacy* near you'.