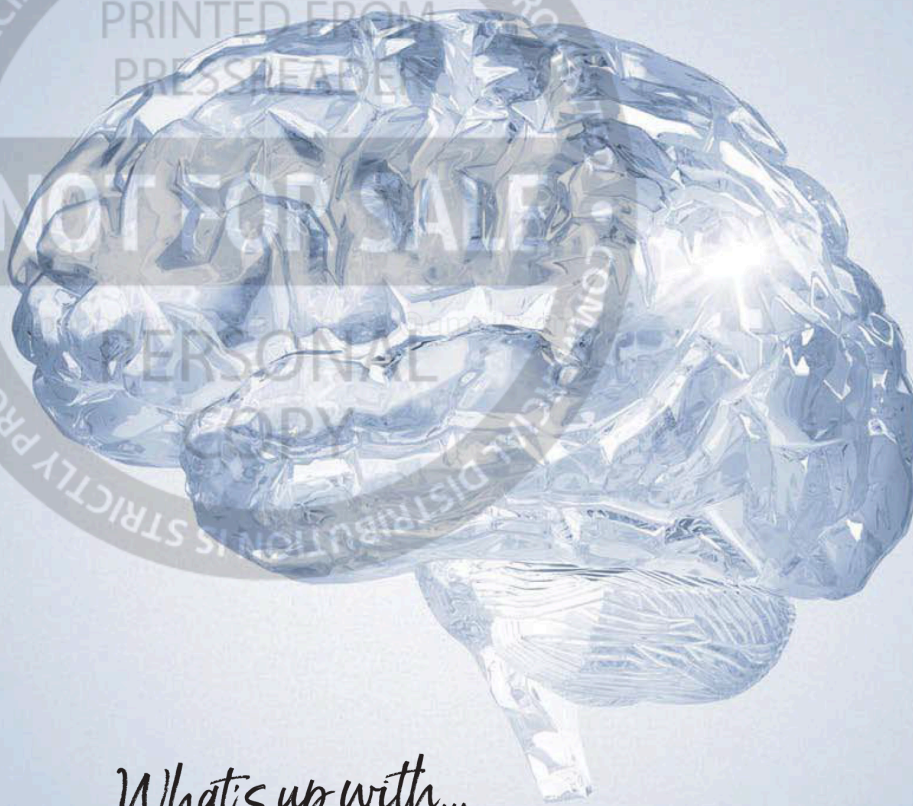


- Brain freeze

Health



What's up with...

BRAIN FREEZE

Feel a sudden strong zap of pain in your head whenever you sip a cold milkshake? Here's why.

BY KAYLA BLANTON

Nothing ruins the first soft serve of summer like a lightning bolt of pain shooting through your frontal lobe. You may have experienced brain freeze – or an ‘ice-cream headache’ – often as an overexcited, slushy-scarfing kid. But any time you eat or drink something very cold – especially quickly – you risk feeling that intense (but, thankfully, brief) sensation all over again. Other brain freeze-inducing culprits can include ice blocks, ice cubes and other frozen delights.

WHAT CAUSES BRAIN FREEZE?

Brain freeze is medically known as cold neuralgia or sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia, and it happens when the roof of your mouth or throat is cooled too quickly, explains GP Dr Heather Viola. “Blood vessels throughout the head expand to let extra blood into the area for

warmth,” she says, adding that the surrounding nerve endings in the brain perceive this as a red flag and so it causes sudden pain, typically most intensely in the forehead, the temples and behind the eyes or nose. Breathing in cold air can trigger brain freeze, too, she adds.

HOW TO RELIEVE THE BRAIN PAIN

You can avoid getting brain freeze by taking smaller sips or nibbles of whatever cold substance you're consuming, says intensive care physician Dr Roger Scheult. But, when the pain hits, you can get things back to normal by bringing the temperature in your mouth and throat back up, says Dr Viola. “Drink a warm or room-temperature liquid,” she advises. Don't have one on hand? Try this quick fix: “Press your tongue or thumb against the roof of your mouth to transfer warmth,” she suggests.

THE BRAIN FREEZE-HEADACHE CONNECTION

Though brain freeze is not serious and usually goes away quickly on its own, Dr Viola points out that research has shown a link between brain freeze and migraines. “Some studies have revealed that brain freeze is more common in people who experience migraines,” she says. Since both types of head pain are affected by blood flow in the brain, she recommends talking to your doctor if you're experiencing brain freeze more often than usual. **P**