

# Give your brain a proper workout

## LEARNING NEW SKILLS, EXERCISE AND STAYING SOCIABLE CAN HELP KEEP YOUR MIND SHARP. BY

Grimsby Telegraph · 17 Jun 2025 · 17 · CAMILLA FOSTER

SUMMER isn't just a time for beach days and barbecues – it's also the perfect opportunity to recharge your brain. Here are some simple steps we can take to support brain health and lower the risk of dementia as we age.



### 1. Learn a new skill (that you enjoy)

“Keep your brain active by doing the things that you enjoy doing,” recommends Professor Jonathan Schott, professor of neurology at UCL and chief medical officer at Alzheimer’s Research UK. “I’ve previously said, ‘If you hate Sudoku, don’t do Sudoku’ as you’re not going to stick with it.”

“What we think is, when you learn new skills, those areas [in the brain] get connected better together and the connections get stronger – that’s why when you repeat a skill over and over and over again then that movement becomes more automatic,” says Prof Schott. “And we think that it probably makes the brain more resilient.”

### 2. Do something active everyday

“I think exercising is the single best thing that we can do,” says Prof Schott. “We talk at Alzheimer’s

Research UK about what’s good for your heart is good for your brain, and that’s because lots of the risk factors for your heart are also risk factors for brain diseases as well. “Exercise can lower your blood pressure, can lower your cholesterol, can take your weight down and gives you a sense of wellbeing. “Ideally, you want to be doing a little bit of exercise everyday and want to be doing something that gets your heart rate substantially elevated for at least 20 minutes three or four times a week.” There is also growing evidence exercise can buffer some of the effects of the causes of dementia.

### 3. Go on regular walks

Prof Schott explains: “Some of the research that we’ve done suggests that it’s actually a relatively small but sustained amount of activity throughout your life, that may be the most beneficial.” Walking with others also offers additional social benefits, and Alzheimer’s Research UK is

set to host a variety of Walk For A Cure events across the UK this summer – ranging from family-friendly 5km routes to more challenging 42km hikes.

#### 4. Stay connected

Several studies also suggest that social isolation can raise the risk of dementia, so staying connected with others is a powerful way to support your brain health.

#### 5. Have a blood pressure check

The professor explains that monitoring blood pressure is important because dementia generally stems from two main causes: neurodegenerative diseases and cerebrovascular disease, with the latter involving damage to the brain's blood vessels.

“By reducing the blood pressure, we think we're probably putting less strain on the blood vessels in the brain, which makes them more robust and less likely to get clogged or less likely to burst,” he explains.

#### 6. Complete Alzheimer UK's Think Brain Health Check-in

“I would suggest that everybody does our Think Brain Health Checkin,” recommends Prof Schott. “You can go in and you can put in your own personal circumstances, and it'll ask you questions about things like exercise, smoking, diet and alcohol, and will come up with some easy-to-follow advice.”

Join Alzheimer's Research UK this summer with the return of Walk For A Cure