



# BRAIN TRAINING

IT'S TIME TO CRACK OUT THE SUDOKU! BECAUSE AN ACTIVE MIND EQUALS GLOWING SKIN AND A SOUPED-UP SEX DRIVE

**I**F YOU'RE thinking "brain training" is for an older crowd, think again – and pick up a crossword. Research just in from UCLA reveals our brain performs at its peak until the age of 39 and then it's on a downward spiral, a fast track to forgetfulness.

By keeping your brain young, you maximise the chance of your body being younger, fitter and healthier too.

Dr Michael Zacharia, president of the Australasian Academy of Anti-Ageing Medicine tells us that, while most headlines on training your brain revolve around keeping your memory

sharp in old age, its impact actually goes far deeper than that.

"The brain is the ageing control centre for the whole body," he explains. "It sends signals to the organs asking what they need and they reply back. This is what keeps you in good health. But when brain function starts to decline, this feedback system doesn't work as well."

In fact, a declining brain sends out what some experts refer to as a "death code" to the organs and hormone-producing glands of the body which slows their performance too. Result? Slow but total body annihilation! Your

bones don't get the signal to rebuild – cue thinning. Levels of hormones that keep your skin springy and elastic decline. Your heart and blood vessels don't function as well. And as for your sex drive – well without commands to keep pumping the hormones, it's nanna nighties and separate rooms in no time.

But start protecting things early and you may delay when the "death code" trigger gets pushed or eliminate it totally, says Dr Zacharia. "The brain degrades slowly but it can be slowed further or even reversed if you remove lifestyle factors [smoking, a high-fat diet] and focus on things that repair the brain and build new connections." So how to achieve this? Here, six steps to keeping your brain young.

