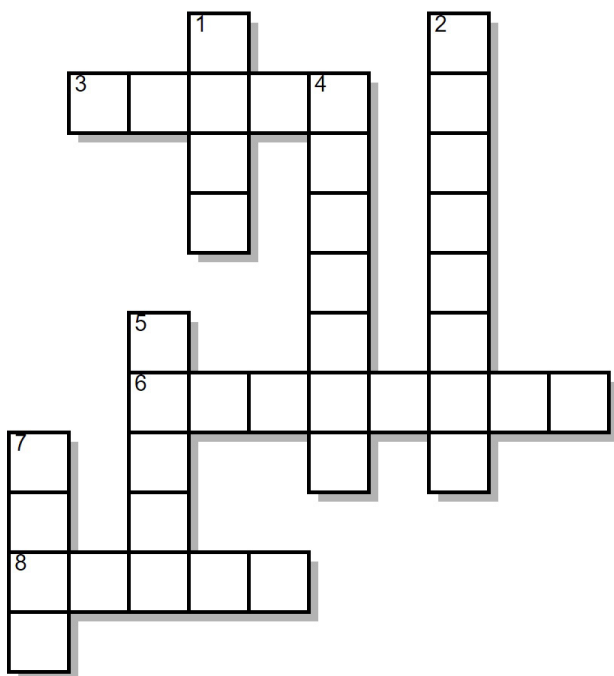# BRAIN PUZZLE

Just like physical exercise, you can exercise your mind by doing things you find challenging. Keeping your mind active can help you feel good and think more clearly. You could try reading, singing, playing games, chatting to new people or a simple crossword like the one below.

ACROSS

3 Capital of the largest state in Australia

6 A form of physical exercise

8 Direction in which a compass needle normally points

DOWN

1 Short-bodied, tailless amphibian

2 Southeast Asian country

4 The line at which the earth's surface and the sky appear to meet

5 Drink this daily

7 Colour created when mixing red and white

NORTH
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Looking after your brain

Your brain has the ability to learn and change as you age - a process called brain plasticity - but for it to do so, you have to train it on a regular basis.

Research has shown that regular physical exercise is one way to improve cognitive functions like memory recall, problem solving, concentration and attention to detail.

Another way to improve cognitive function is through brain training. This helps the brain turn inactive brain cells into healthy, active ones. Just like physical fitness, brain fitness requires targeted effort. The more you use your brain, the better your mental functions become and brain training exercises are an excellent way to maintain overall brain health.

Staying socially active and involved is also very important for the brain.

Here in the Northern Sydney Local Health District, we are conducting research into how intergenerational programs can help with social isolation and loneliness. The success of the ABC series "Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds" - which partly came about as a result of a generous bequest left to our team - is a lovely example of how intergenerational programs can improve quality of life and reduce loneliness in older people. We are looking at how these types of programs can be rolled out more widely.

Professor Sue Kurrle AO
Staff Specialist Geriatrician
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