

HOST SEES HOW CLEVER WE ARE

The Doctor will test your IQ now



SO we're here to talk about The Great British Intelligence Test, going out tonight on BBC Two. But before we begin, there's something important I've been desperate to ask its co-presenter Dr Michael Mosley.

Namely: "How long can you stand on one leg with your eyes shut?"

To his credit, Michael's not remotely thrown by my inquiry.

"I can do about eight to 10 seconds," he replies. "Then I really start to wobble."

Same as me, then. Phew.

See, I've been worrying about this whole eyes-shut, stand-on-one-leg business ever since Michael mentioned it on Horizon a couple of years back.

Research had revealed that a healthy human being should manage at least a few seconds.

But hey, if I'm on a par with TV's Michael Mosley, standing-on-one-leg-wise (he's 63, but a jolly fit 63), then that'll do me fine.

Sorry, where were we? Ah yes, The Great British Intelligence Test, based on an online survey tackled by more than 250,000 people. Sounds intriguing.

"We thought it was an interesting area to explore," says Michael, who co-hosts tonight's show with Hannah Fry.

"It's a subject where the science has moved on."

By "moving on" he means the traditional way we've defined intelligence is now seen as a bit narrow. Seems it no longer means you have to be a quantum physicist or a rocket scientist or one of those boffins on University Challenge.

"Just being able to memorise lots of facts does not make you super-intelligent," says Michael.

"A broader definition of intelligence would be 'problem-solving'. That may involve something more practical like, 'How can I fix this car or build this house?'"

Michael is also a big believer in the use-it-or-lose-it theory when it comes to our brains. He has a "justifiable fear"



THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW

**MICHAEL
MOSLEY**
TELLY MEDIC

about us becoming over-reliant on tech, especially smartphones. Exercising our brains, he says, has huge benefits.

"Years ago, I did a film where we looked at London cabbies. We measured the part of the brain called the hippocampus, and it turned out theirs were much bigger than average.

"Now, it could just be that people like that become cab drivers. But it's more likely it grew as a result of them having to do the Knowledge."

Fitness, too, he says, helps keep us sharp. A good diet, plenty of exercise etc. And he preaches what he preaches.

"This morning I rolled out of bed, did 40 press-ups, a bunch of squats, then went for a run."

Blimey, anything else? "We lost the TV remote a couple of years ago," he adds, "and I've never got around to replacing it."

"So whenever I want to switch channels I have to get out of my chair!"

On top of all this, Michael also advises plenty of shut-eye.

"Sleep is really important for clearing out the gunk in your brain," he says.

And by following all these guidelines can we actually make ourselves smarter?

"You can certainly hit your max," is how Michael prefers to put it, "and stay as sharp as possible."

"But broadly speaking, IQ is a bit like height.

"If someone is 5ft 6in tall, there's nothing you can do to make them 6ft."

● **Horizon: The Great British Intelligence Test is on tonight at 9pm on BBC Two.**

It's a subject where the science has moved on...

EVOLVING THOUGHT:
Practical, problem-solving skills are a sign of intelligence, says Michael