



Your body knows the difference between simple touch and touch that causes pain. And more amazingly, it knows exactly what to do about it.

Your sense of touch

The nervous system is your body's sensory command center. It registers sensations and interprets them — then puts a reaction into action.

Nerves

1

These bundles of fibers receive feeling and send an alert to the brain via the spinal cord.

The spinal cord

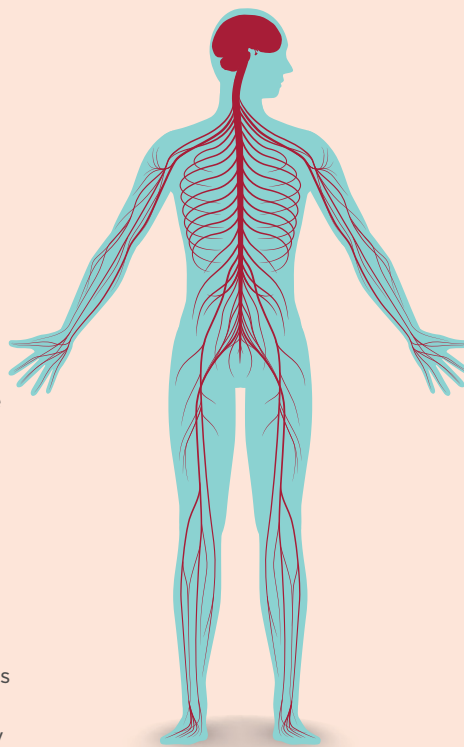
2

This “middle manager” makes split decisions, like triggering reflexes, while moving the message to the brain.

The brain

3

As the body's command center, the brain interprets the feeling, associates an emotion, directs the body to respond and, if needed, tells it to heal.



Types of pain

Whether caused by a pinprick or a chronic illness, pain comes in many different forms. These are the three most common categories and their causes.

Nociceptive

Detected by nerves in your body's soft tissue, such as muscles or skin.



Examples:



headaches



pelvic pain



arthritis



injury-related pain

Neuropathic

Caused by malfunctioning nerves, it's described as sharp, stabbing or shooting.



Examples:



phantom limb pain



sciatica



carpal tunnel syndrome



shingles

Psychogenic

Caused by nerve pathways from a psychological disorder, such as depression or anxiety.



Examples:



stomach pain



muscle aches

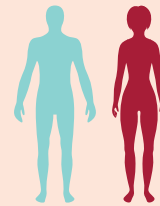


body pains

Battle of the sexes

Who has a higher threshold for pain? According to some research, it's men. However, women may be wired to feel pain more intensely because they:

- **Have more pain receptors in their skin**
- **Produce a protein that intensifies pain**
- **Produce a protein that dulls painkillers**



From the expert

"The nervous system is an incredible thing. It's always working to connect you to your environment through your senses, and helps keep you safe from harm."

— Dr. Jeremy Hogan, a neurologist with
Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group



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