

Sensory Loss

The central nervous system controls the **sensory** and **motor functions** of the body. Diseases of this system therefore lead to loss of some of these functions.

Function	Loss	Other symptoms
hearing	deafness	buzzing or ringing in the ear (tinnitus)
sight	blindness	double vision (diplopia) blurring (loss of visual acuity – clarity of vision)
sensation (feeling)	numbness (anaesthesia)	tingling or pins and needles (paraesthesiae)
balance	unsteadiness (ataxia)	dizziness (vertigo)

Note: There are no common words for loss of, or conditions relating to, taste and smell.

Motor Loss

Motor loss symptoms and signs include:

- **weakness** – loss of power
- **paralysis** – complete loss of power
- **tremor** – involuntary rhythmic movement, especially of the hands
- **abnormal gait** – unusual manner of walking

Speech may also be affected, for example with **hoarseness** – a rough, deep voice as in vocal cord paralysis. **Slurred speech** means poor articulation, as in cerebellar disease.

Loss of consciousness

Patients may describe sudden loss of consciousness in a number of ways:

I	passed out. had a blackout. fainted
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I had a	a fit. seizure. convulsion.
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Fit, **seizure** and **convulsion** are all used to refer to violent **involuntary movements**, as in epilepsy.

Doctors may say: “When did you lose consciousness?”

Here is a passage from a textbook on the causes of loss of consciousness.

The principal differential diagnosis is between an **epileptic fit** and a **syncopal attack**, or **fainting**. **Syncope** is a sudden loss of consciousness due to temporary failure of the cerebral circulation. Syncope is distinguished from a seizure principally by the circumstances in which the event occurs. For example, syncope usually occurs whilst standing, under situations of severe **stress**, or in association with an arrhythmia. Sometimes a convulsion and **urinary continence** – **loss of control** of the bladder – occur even in a syncopal attack. Thus, neither of these is specific for an epileptic attack. The key is to establish the presence of **prodromal symptoms**, or symptoms that occur immediately before the attack. Syncopal episodes are usually preceded by symptoms of **dizziness** and **light-headedness**. In epilepsy, people may **get a warning**, known as an **aura**, that an attack is going to happen.

Note: The noun convulsion is often used in plural form – *He had **convulsions** as a child.*

Complete the table with words from the above text.

Adjective	Noun
blind	
conscious	
deaf	
dizzy	
numb	
light-headed	
unsteady	

Make word combinations using a word from each box.

double
epileptic
prodromal
syncopal
urinary
visual

acuity
attack
incontinence
symptom
vision
fit

A doctor is trying to determine the cause of loss of consciousness in a 52-year-old man. Complete the doctor's questions.

Did you lose (1) _____ suddenly or gradually?
 Did you get a (2) _____ of the attack?
 What were you doing before you (3) _____ out?
 Were you worried or under any (4) _____ at the time?
 Did you feel (5) _____ or (6) _____ - _____ before the attack?
 Did you lose (7) _____ of your bladder?
 Did your wife notice any (8) _____ movements while you were unconscious?

Express your idea.

Smells can diagnose Alzheimer's

According to a newspaper article, research has shown that inability to identify ten particular smells is an early sign of Alzheimer's disease. What do you think the ten smells are?