

Introduction to Physiology for medical students 2021-2022

Introduction to neurophysiology

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Modified by:
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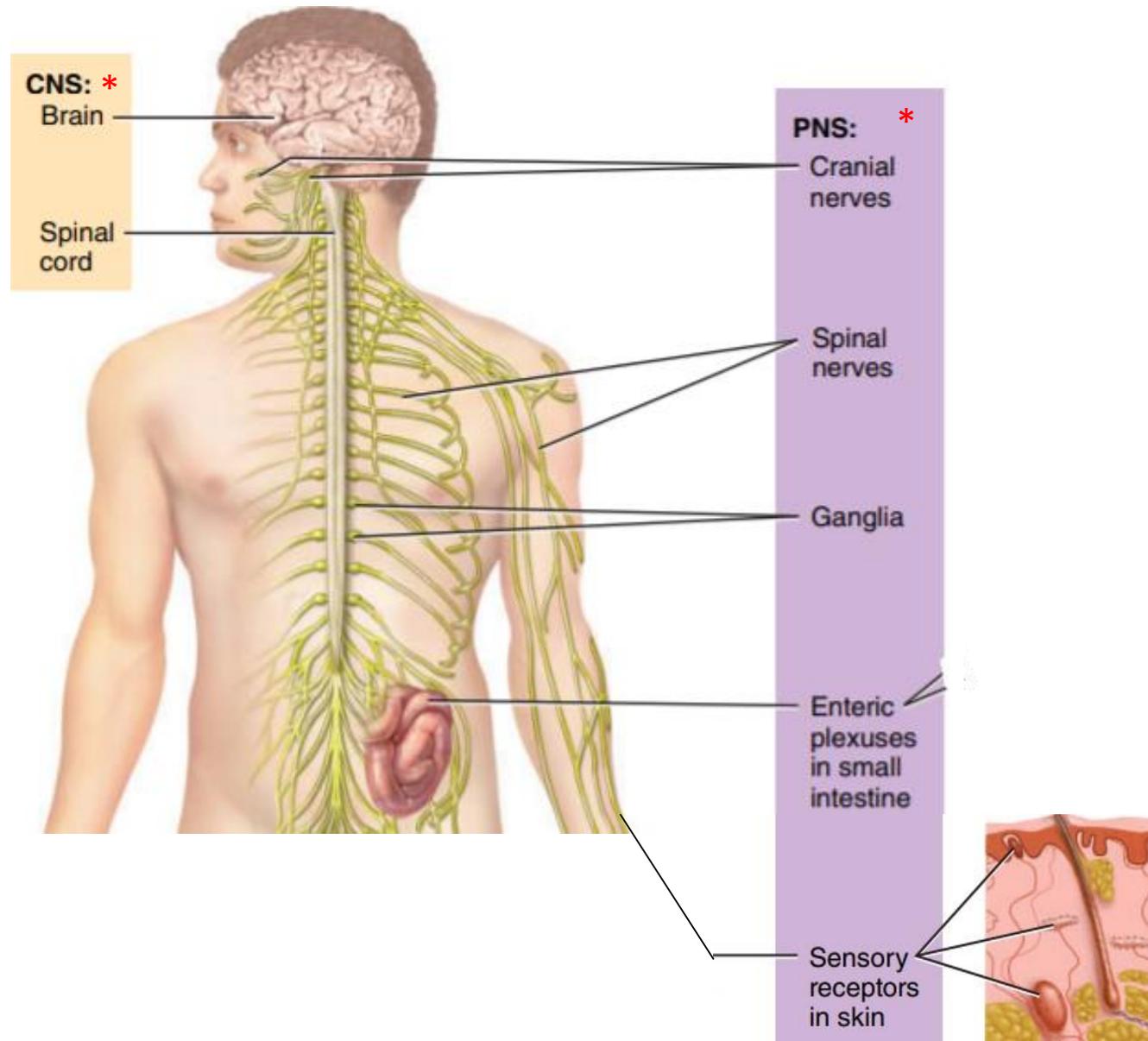
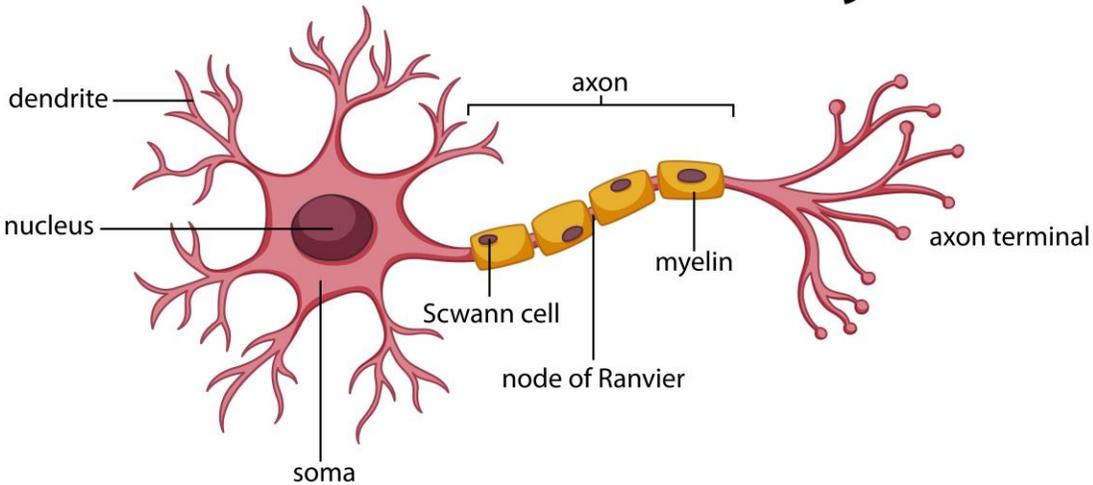
Overview of this lecture

- 1) Organization & Subdivisions of the nervous system (NS).
- 2) Functions of NS.
- 3) Sensations and different sensory modalities.
- 4) Types of sensory receptors.
- 5) Some characteristics of sensory receptors.

1) Organization of the nervous system

Central
Peripheral

Neuron Anatomy



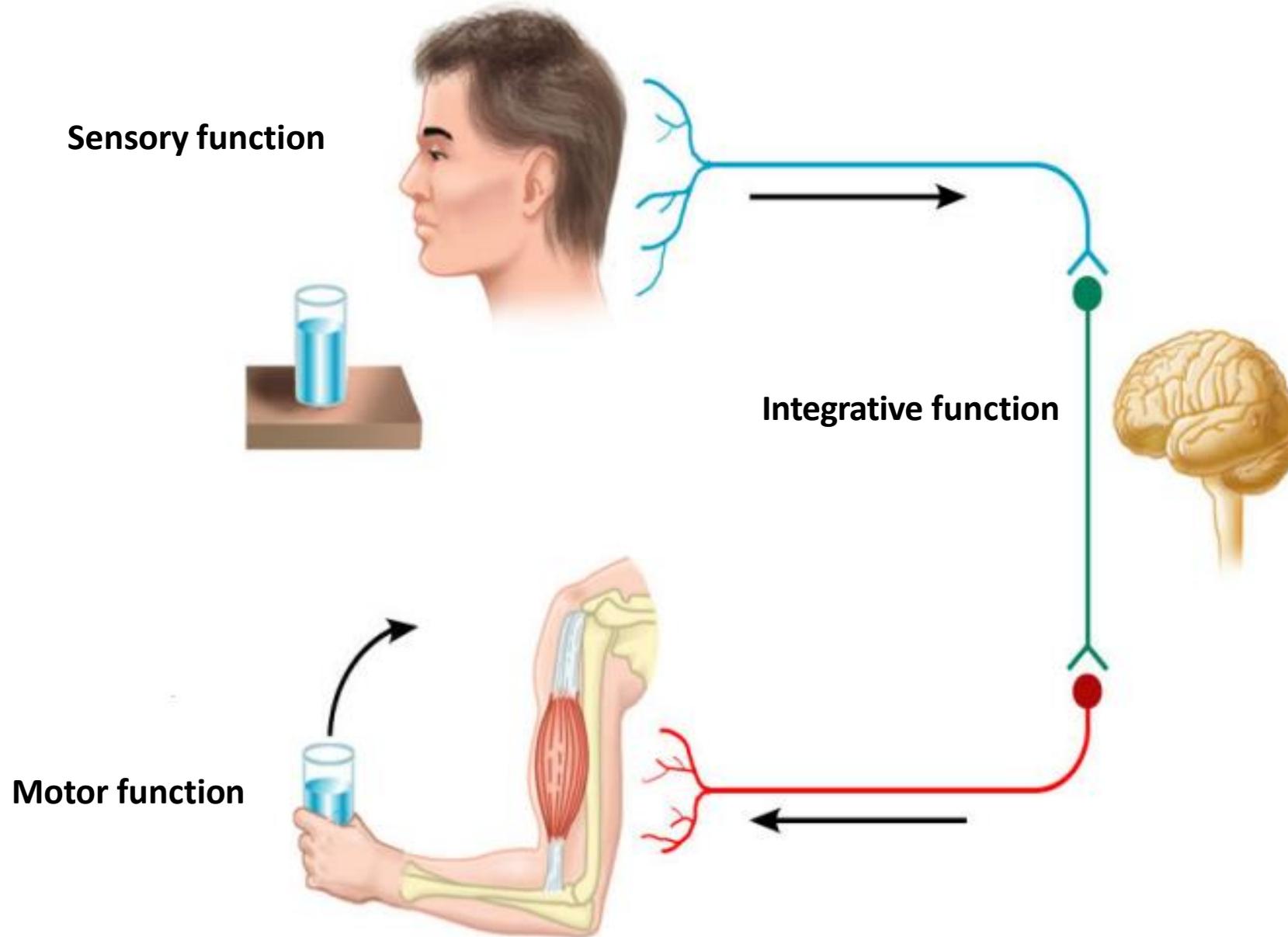
1) Organization of the nervous system

- The nervous system is composed of two divisions:
- The central nervous system (CNS), which includes the brain and the spinal cord.
- The peripheral nervous system (PNS), which includes sensory receptors, nerves, and ganglia.

- **White matter:** aggregations of myelinated and unmyelinated axons of many neurons
 - **Gray matter:** contains neuronal cell bodies, dendrites, unmyelinated axons, axon terminals, and neuroglia
-
- **Nerves:** Bundles of processes in the PNS
 - **Tracts:** Bundles of processes in the CNS (No Connective tissue)
 - **Ganglion:** cluster of nerve cell bodies in PNS
 - **Nucleus:** cluster of nerve cell bodies in CNS (surrounded by white matter)
 - If not surrounded (Cortex)



2) Functions of the nervous system



2) Functions of the nervous system

- **Sensory function:** sensory receptors detect internal or external stimuli. The sensory information is carried to the CNS through cranial and spinal nerves.
- **Integrative function:** process sensory information by analyzing it and making decision for appropriate responses.
- **Motor function:** activation of effectors (muscles and glands) through cranial and spinal nerves.

Sensory function

- Most activities of the nervous system are initiated by sensory experiences that excite sensory receptors.
- These sensory experiences can either cause immediate reactions from the brain, or memories of the experiences can be stored in the brain for minutes, weeks, or years and determine bodily reactions at some future date.

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Integrative function

- More than 99 percent of the sensory information is discarded by the brain as irrelevant and unimportant.
- However, when important sensory information excites the mind, it is immediately channeled into proper integrative and motor regions of the brain to cause desired responses.
- This channeling and processing of information is called the integrative function of the nervous system.

Storage of information: memory

- Only a small fraction of even the most important sensory information usually causes immediate motor response.
- Much of the information is stored for future control of motor activities and for use in the thinking processes.
- Most storage occurs in the cerebral cortex, but even the basal regions of the brain and the spinal cord can store small amounts of information.

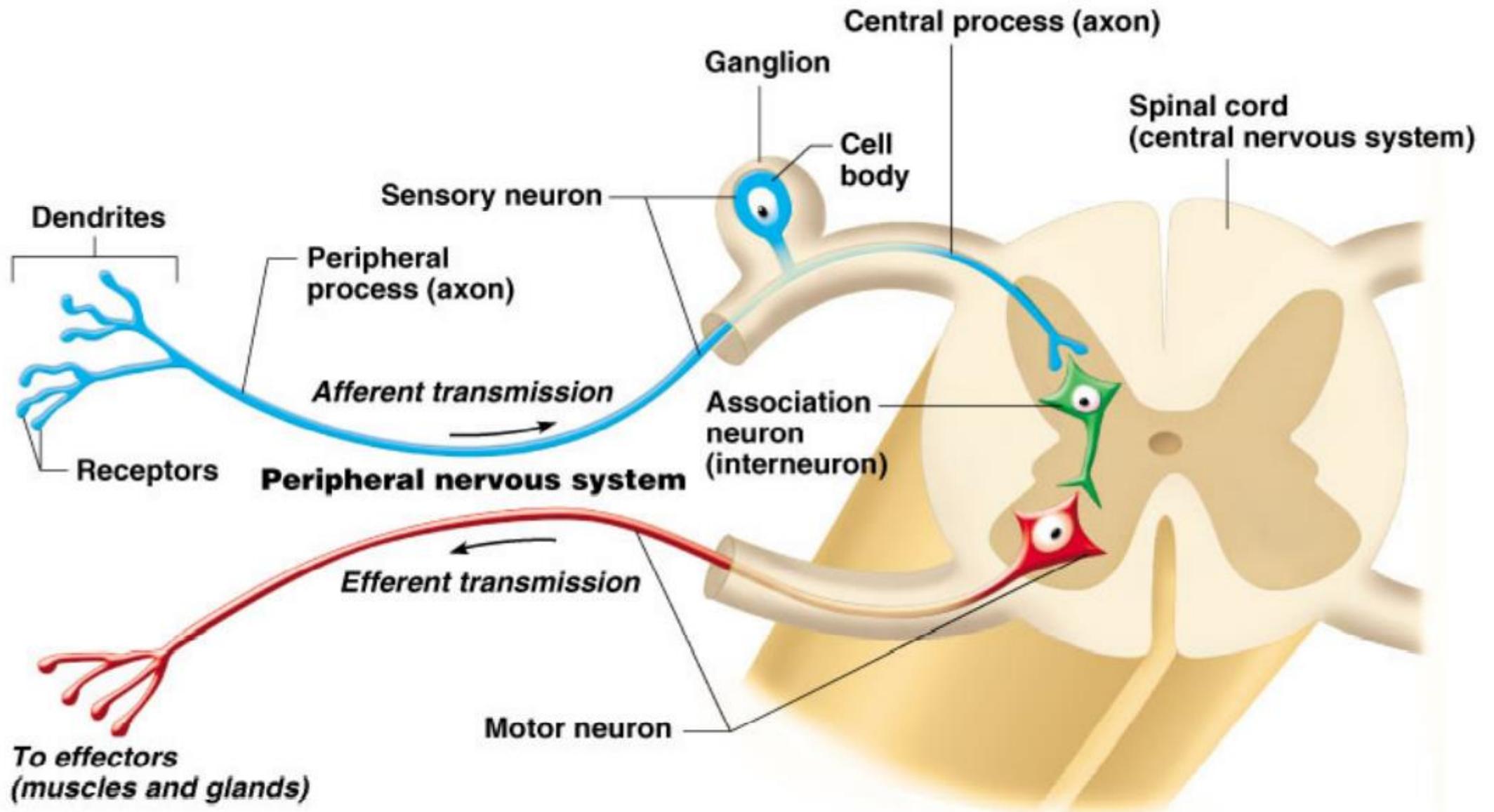
Storage of information: memory

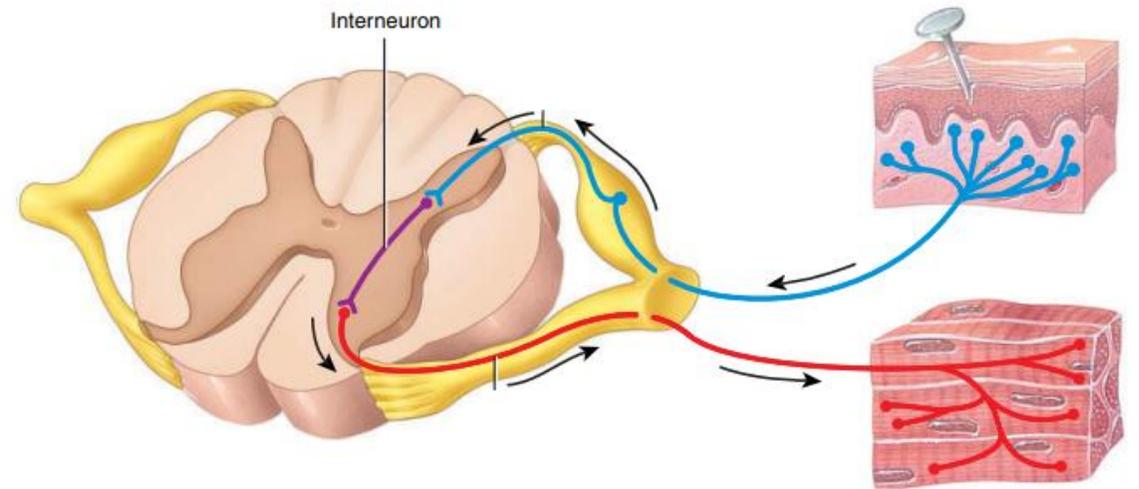
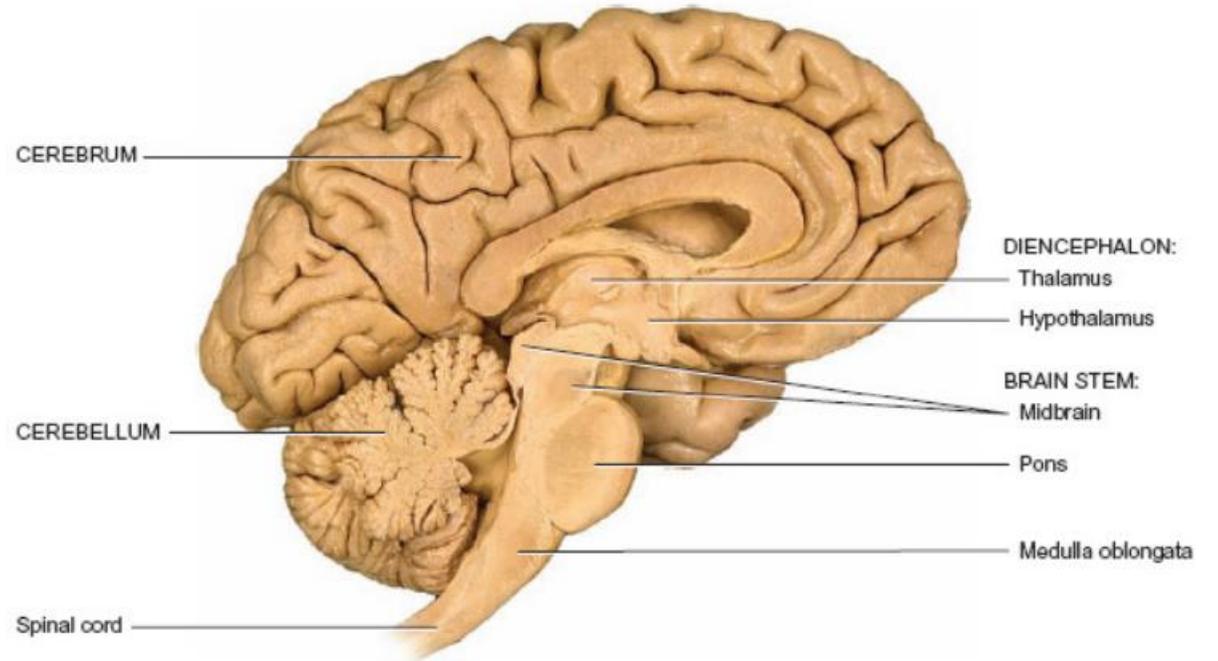
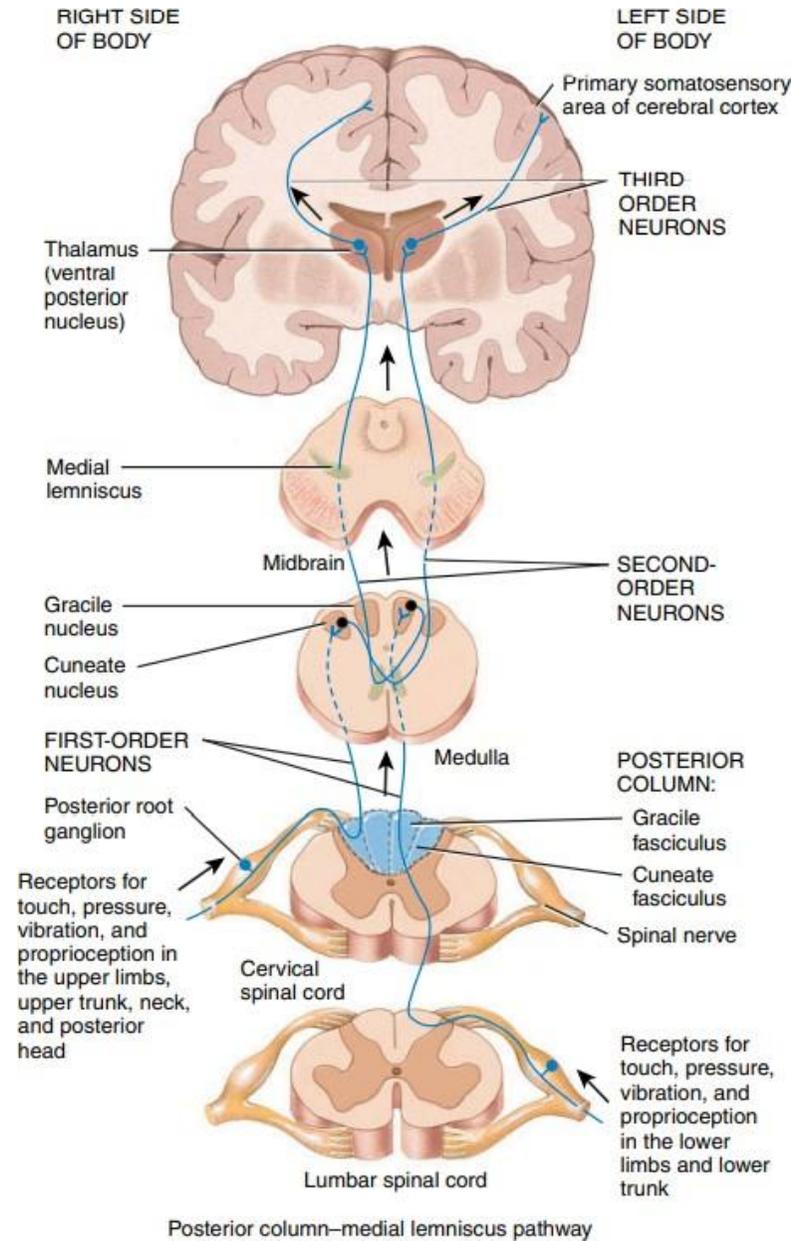
- Once memories have been stored in the nervous system, they become part of the brain processing mechanism for future “thinking.”
- The thinking processes of the brain compare new sensory experiences with stored memories; the memories then help to select the important new sensory information and to channel this into appropriate memory storage areas for future use or into motor areas to cause immediate bodily responses.

Spinal cord

See pictures next two slides

- The spinal cord has two main functions:
- 1- nerve impulse propagation (sensory and motor tracts): transmits signals from the periphery of the body to the brain, or in the opposite direction from the brain back to the body.
- 2- integration of information (such as in spinal reflexes).

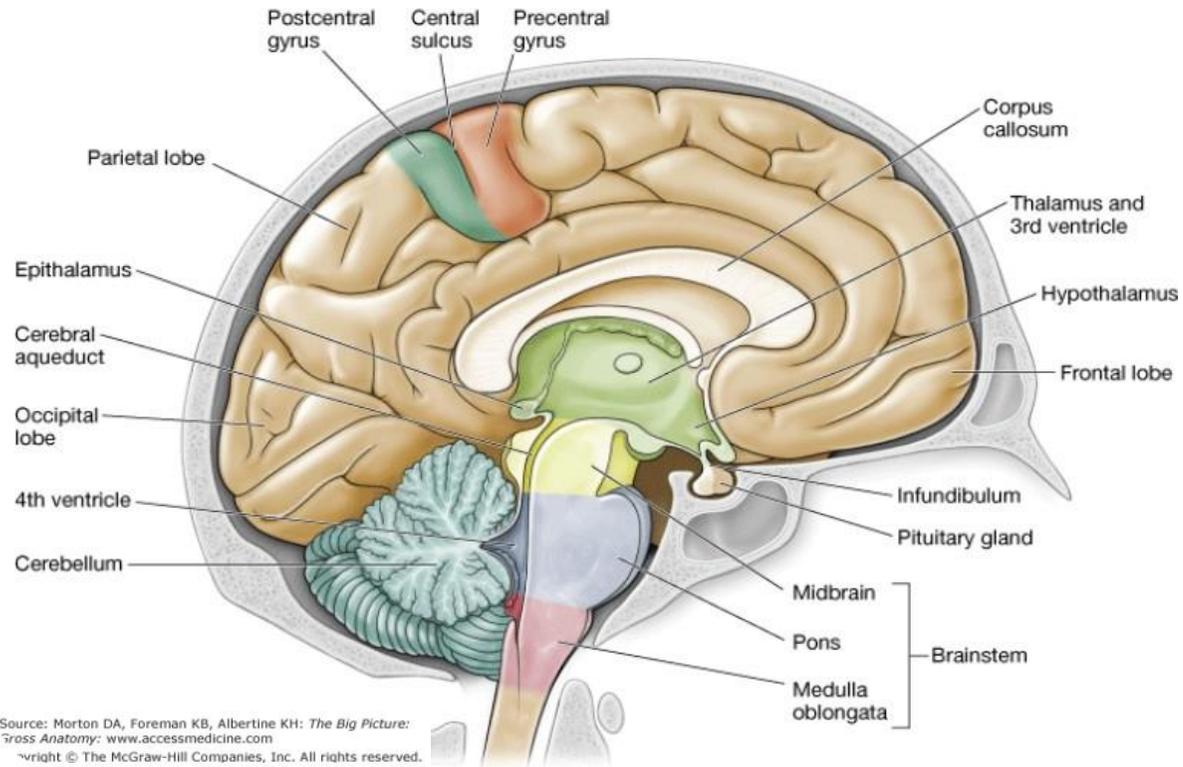




Lower brain (subcortical regions)

- Many, if not most, of the subconscious activities of the body are controlled in the lower areas of the brain.
- Examples of subcortical structures are brain stem, cerebellum, diencephalon, basal nuclei, hippocampus, and amygdala.

Brain



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Higher brain (cerebral cortex)

- Cerebral cortex is an extremely large **memory storehouse**.
- Without the cerebral cortex, the functions of the lower brain centers are often imprecise. Cortical information usually converts these functions to determinative and **precise operations**.
- The cerebral cortex is essential for most of our **thought processes**, **but it cannot function by itself**. In fact, it is the lower brain centers, not the cortex, that initiate wakefulness in the cerebral cortex.

2) Functions of the nervous system

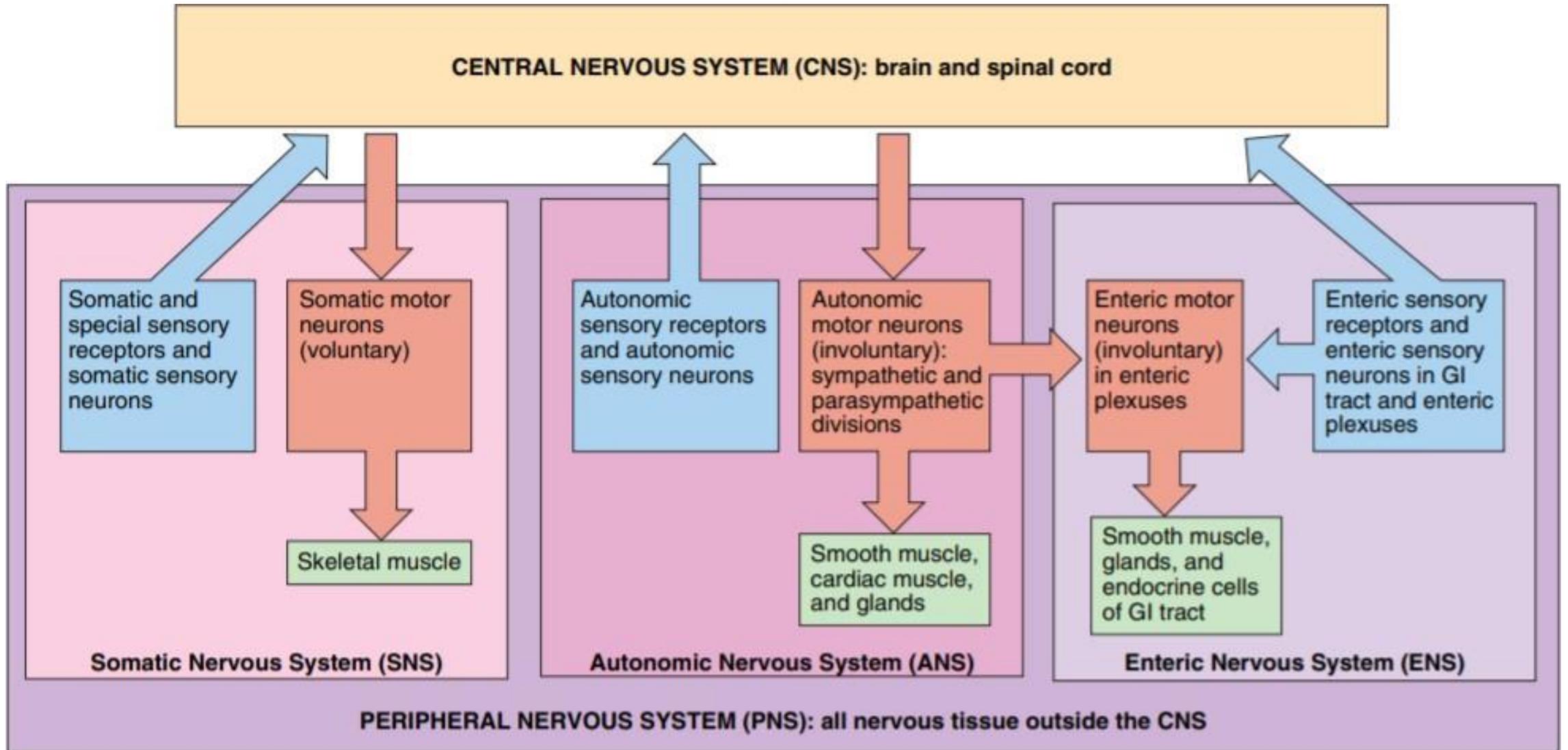
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Motor function

- The most important eventual role of the nervous system is to **control the various bodily activities.**
- This task is achieved by controlling:
 - (1) contraction of appropriate skeletal muscles throughout the body.
 - (2) contraction of smooth muscle in the internal organs.
 - (3) secretion of active chemical substances by both exocrine and endocrine glands in many parts of the body.

Motor function

- These activities are collectively called motor functions of the nervous system.
- The muscles and glands are called **effectors** because they are the actual anatomical structures that perform the functions dictated by the nerve signals.



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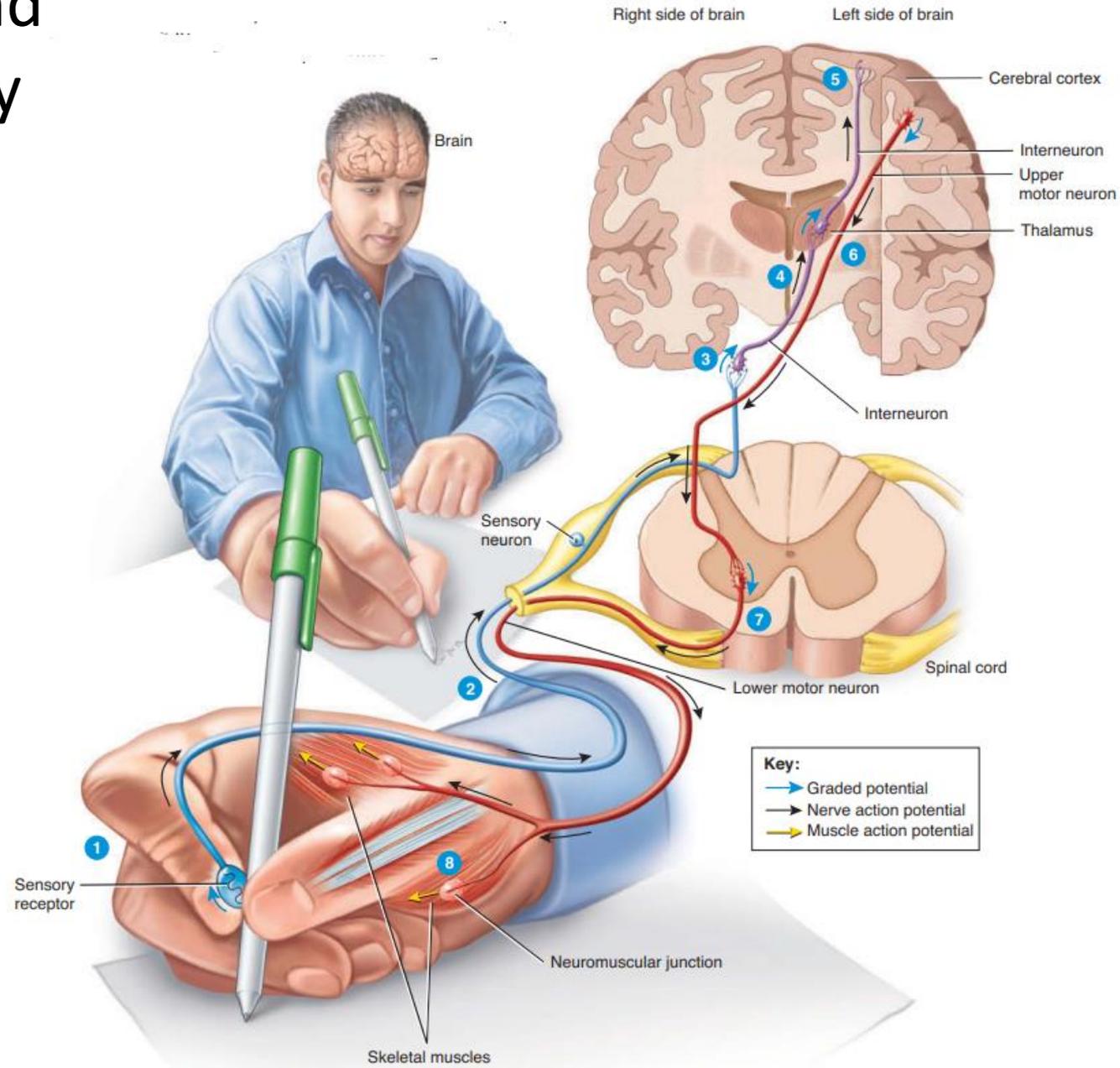
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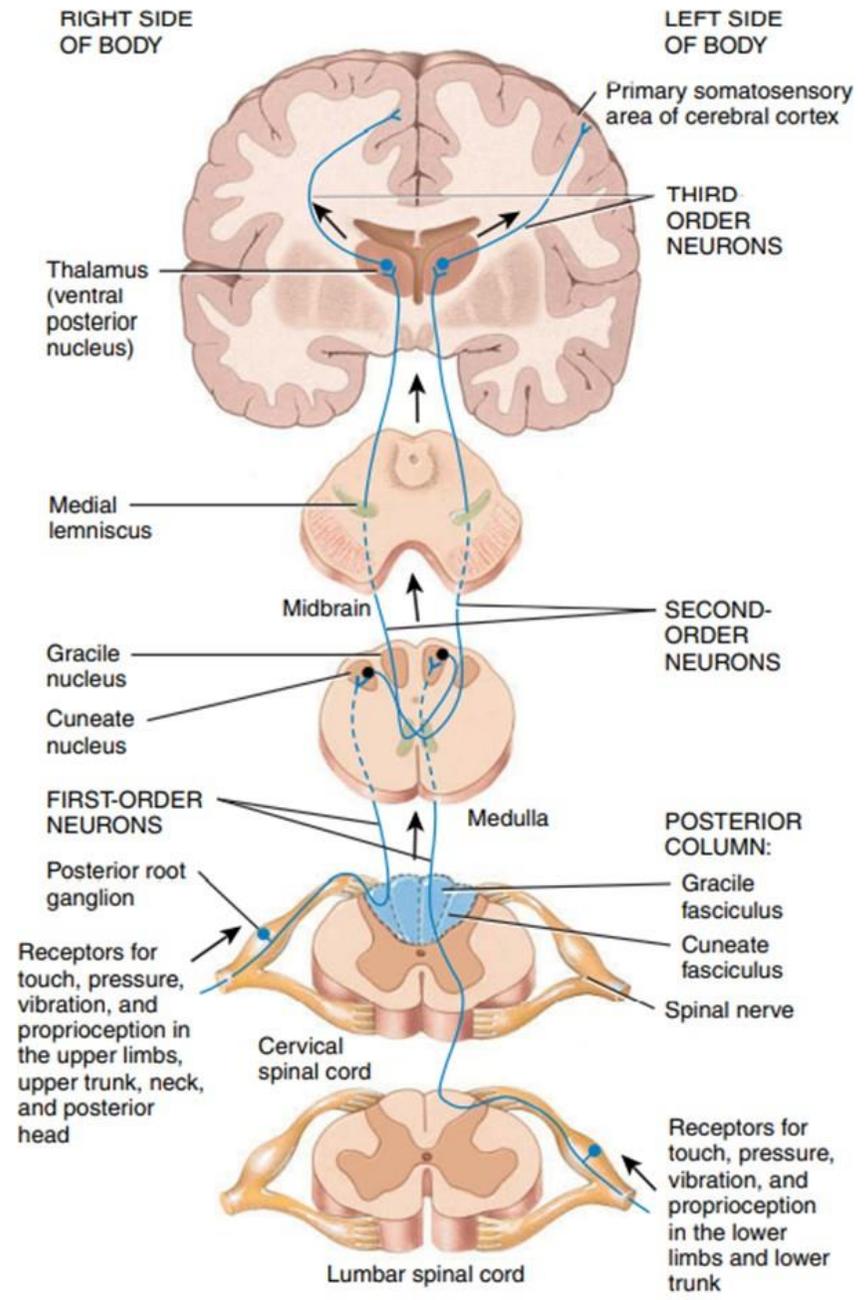


Overview of this lecture

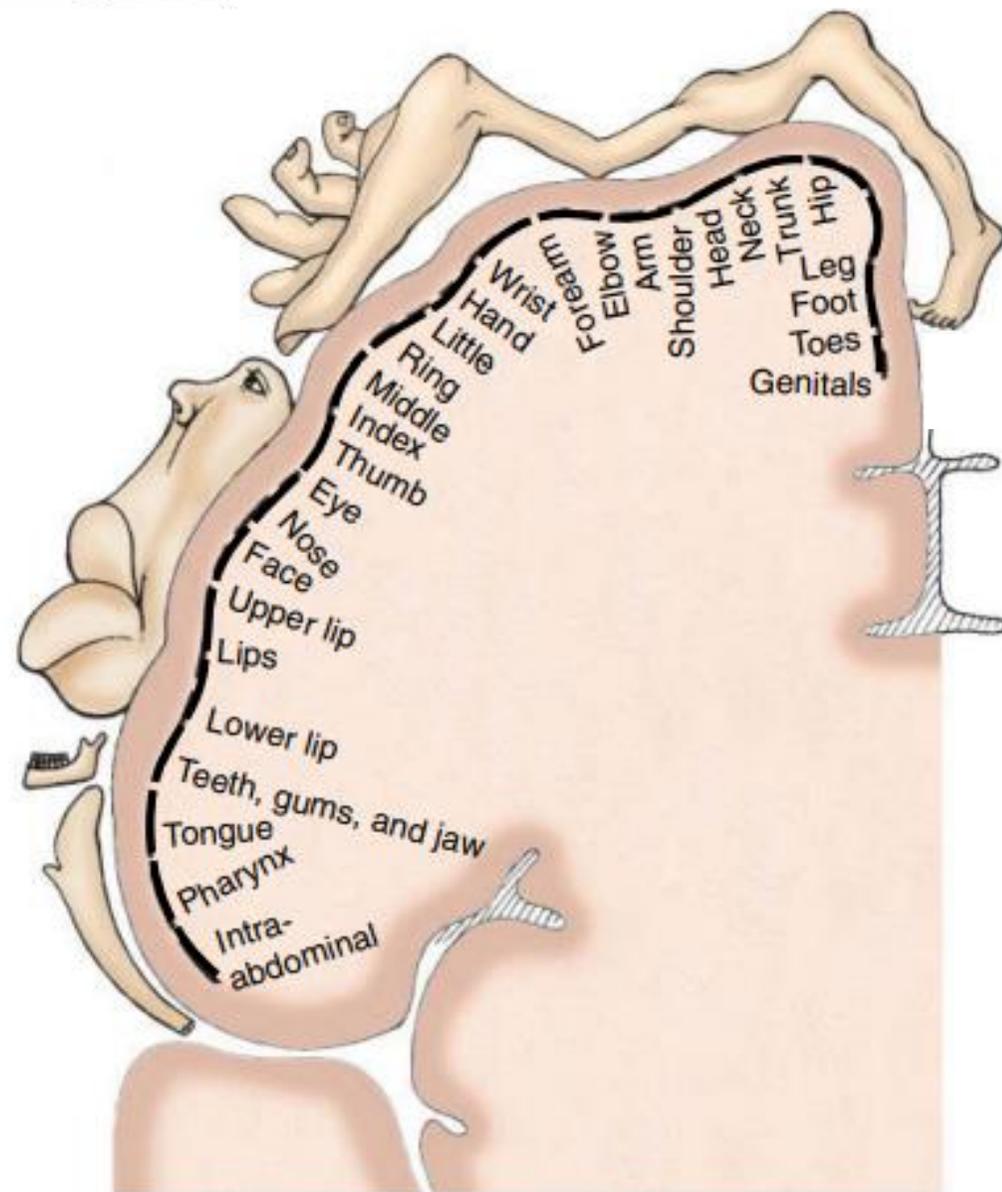
- 1) Organization & Subdivisions of the nervous system (NS).
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- 3) Sensations and different sensory modalities.
- 4) Types of sensory receptors.
- 5) Some characteristics of sensory receptors.

3) Sensations and different sensory modalities.

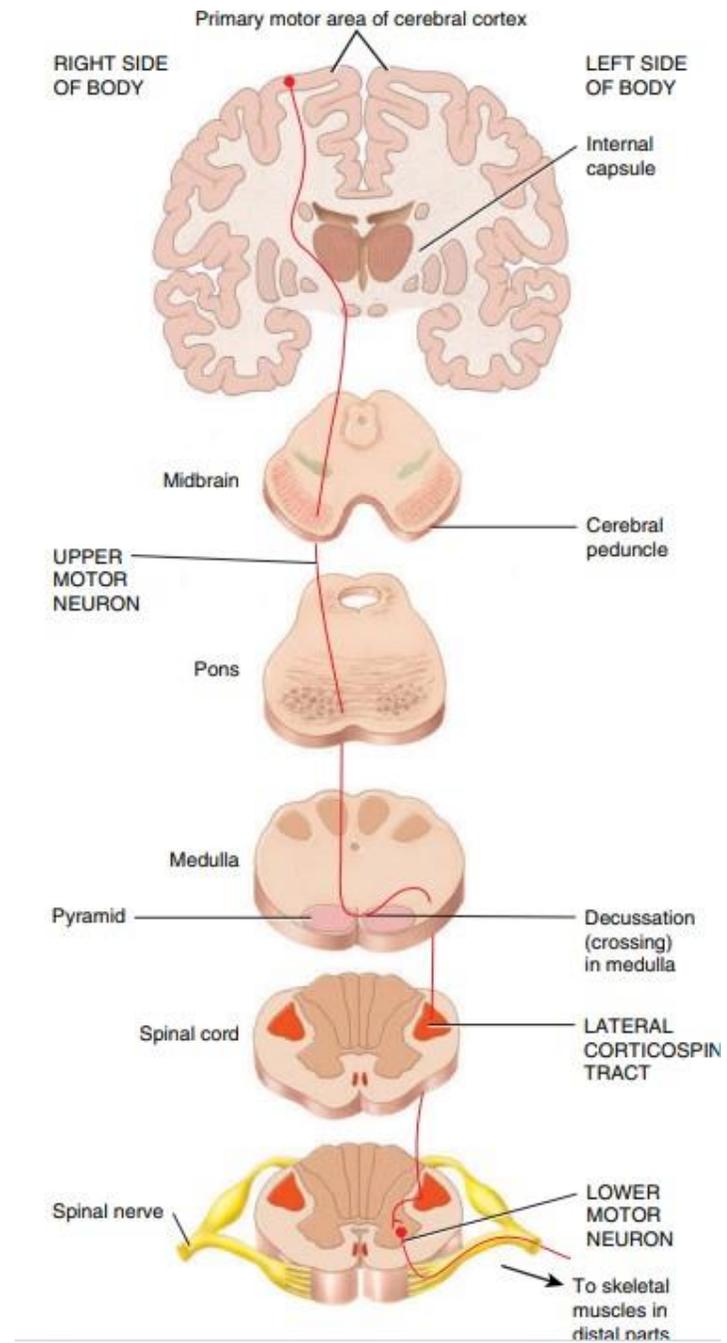


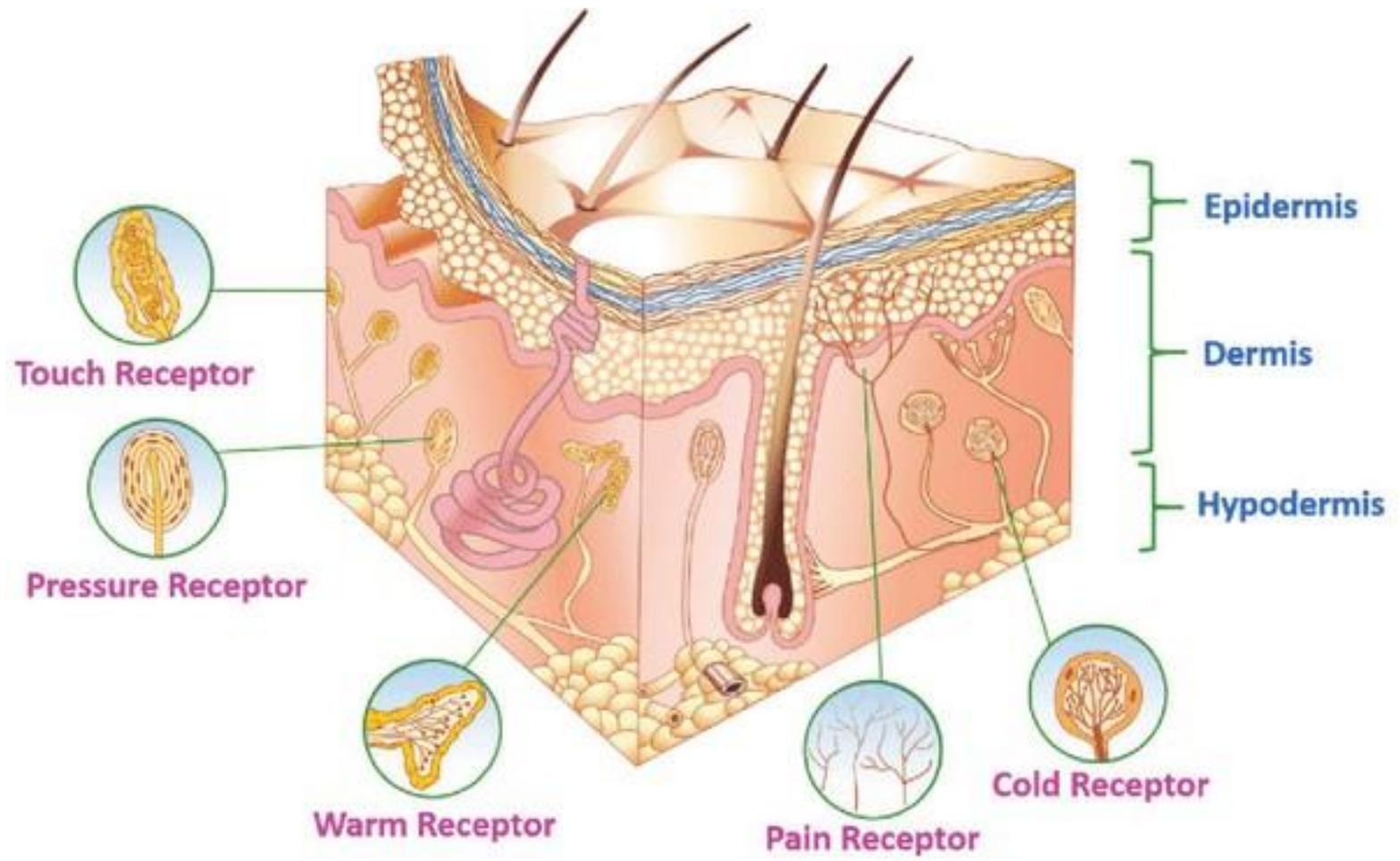


Posterior column–medial lemniscus pathway



(a) Frontal section of primary somatosensory area in right cerebral hemisphere





Sensation

- **Sensation** is the conscious or subconscious awareness of changes in the external or internal environment.
- When sensory impulses reach the cerebral cortex, we become consciously aware of the sensory stimuli and can precisely locate and identify specific sensations such as touch, pain, hearing, or taste.
- **Perception** is the conscious interpretation of sensations and is primarily a function of the cerebral cortex.

Sensory modalities

- Each type of sensation that we can experience, such as touch, pain, vision, or hearing, is called a **sensory modality**.
- Sensory modalities can be grouped into two classes: general senses and special senses.
- The **special senses** include the sensory modalities of smell, taste, vision, hearing, and balance.

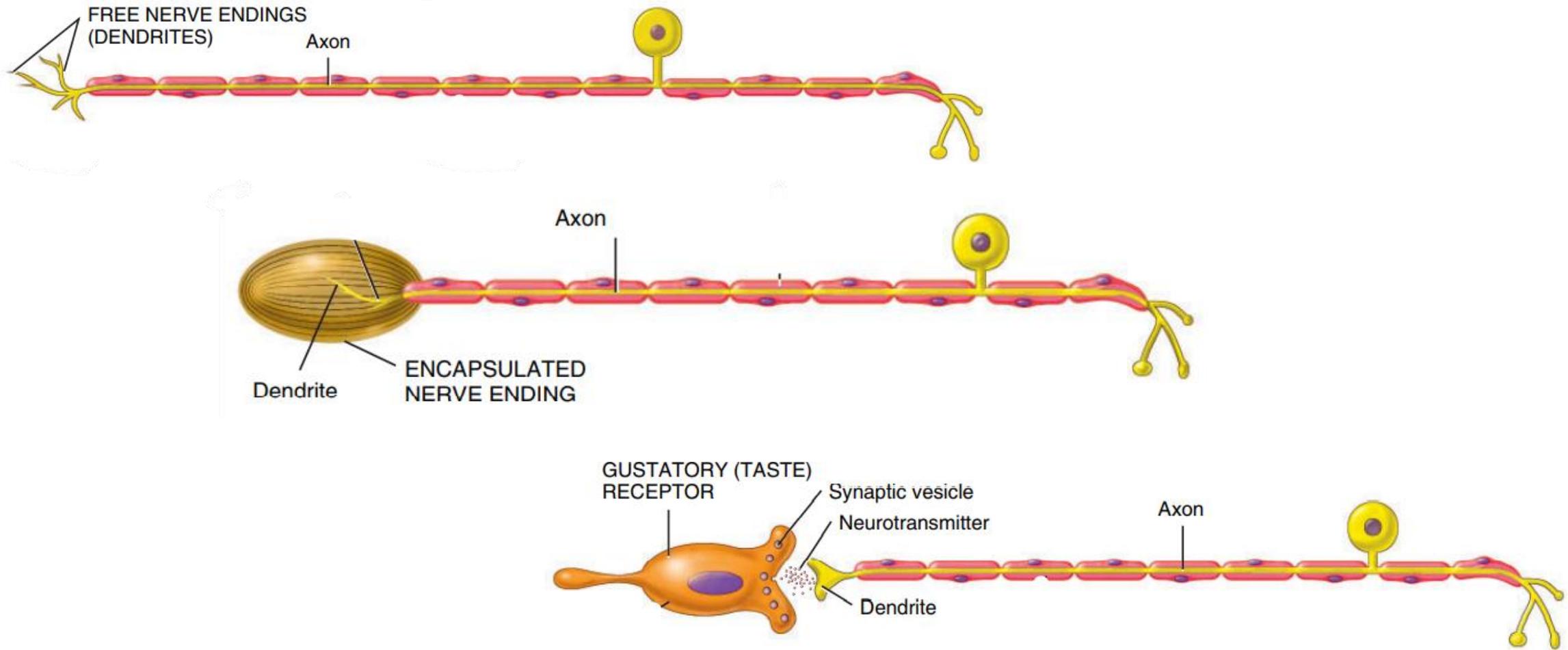
General senses

- The general senses are:
- **Somatic senses:** transmit sensory information from the receptors of the entire body surface and from some deep structures.
- They include tactile sensations (touch, pressure, vibration, itch, and tickle), thermal sensations (warm and cold), pain sensations, and proprioceptive sensations (for position and movement).
- **Visceral senses** provide information about conditions within internal organs such as: pressure, stretch, and temperature.

4) Sensory receptors

- Several structural and functional characteristics of sensory receptors can be used to group them into different classes. These include
- (1) microscopic structure.
- (2) location of the receptors and the origin of stimuli that activate them.
- (3) type of stimulus detected.

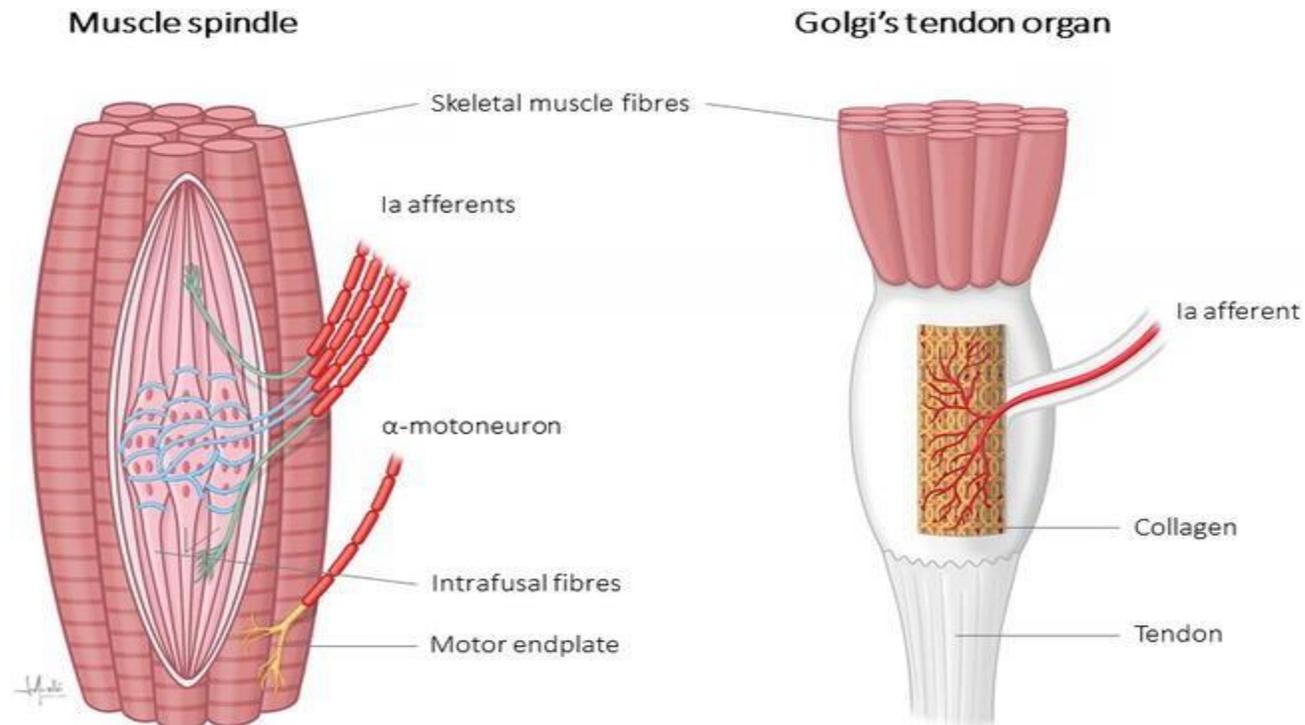
Structure of sensory receptors



Location of sensory receptors

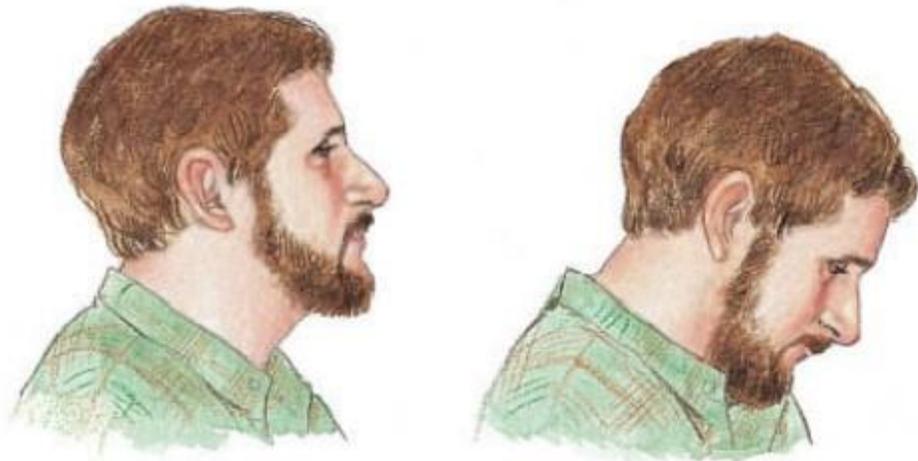
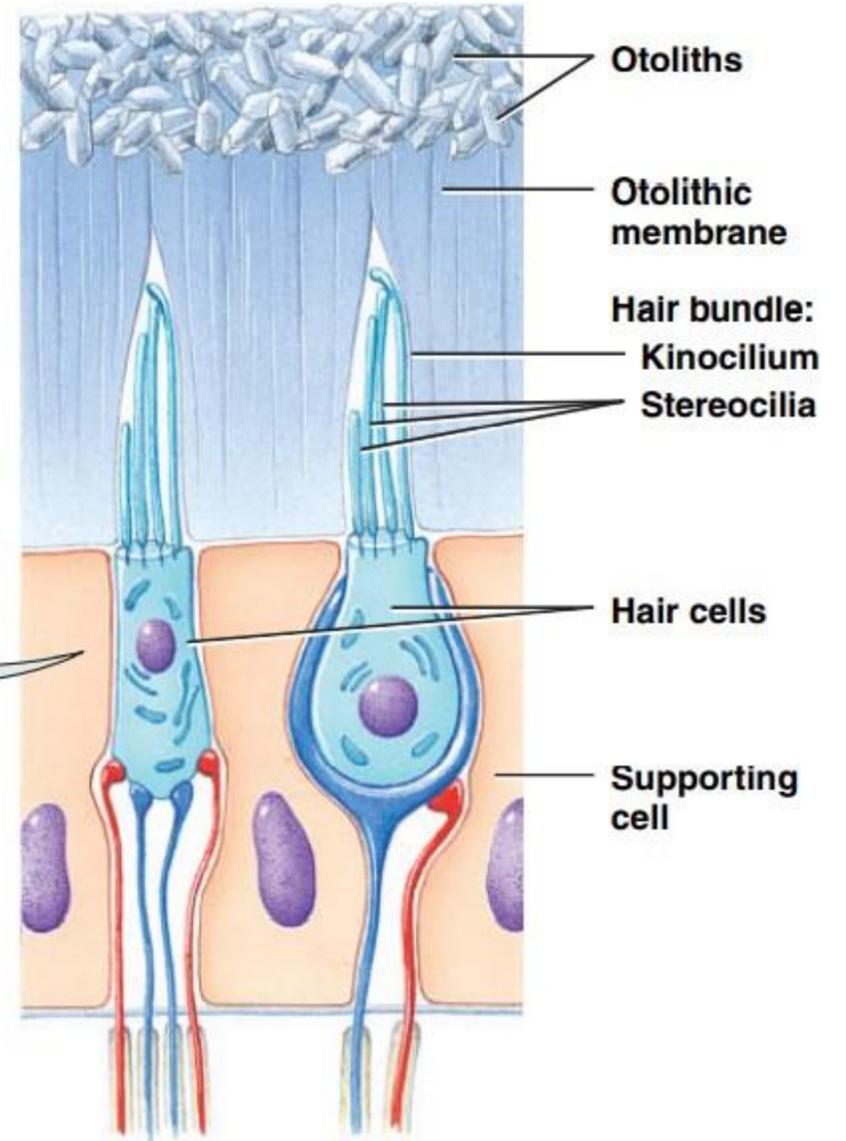
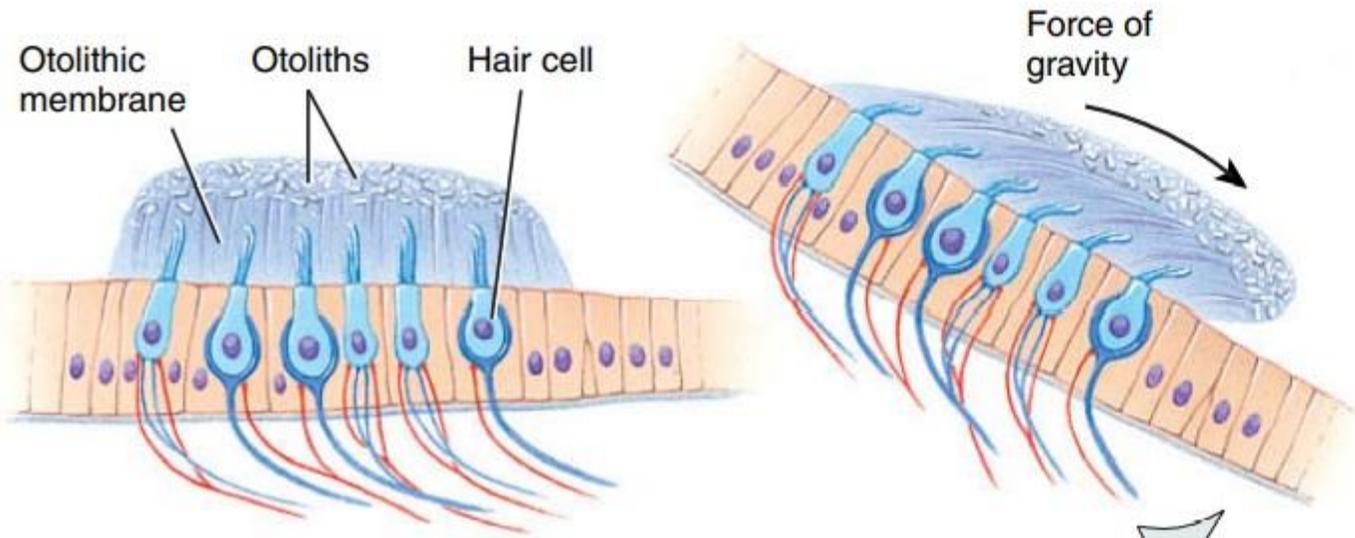
- 1- **Exteroceptors** are located at or near the external surface of the body; they provide information about the external environment.
- Examples are the sensations of hearing, vision, smell, taste, touch, pressure, vibration, temperature, and pain.
- 2- **Interoceptors** or visceroreceptors monitor conditions in the internal environment.

- **3- Proprioceptors** are located in muscles, tendons, joints, and the inner ear. They provide information about body position, muscle length and tension, and the position and movement of the joints.



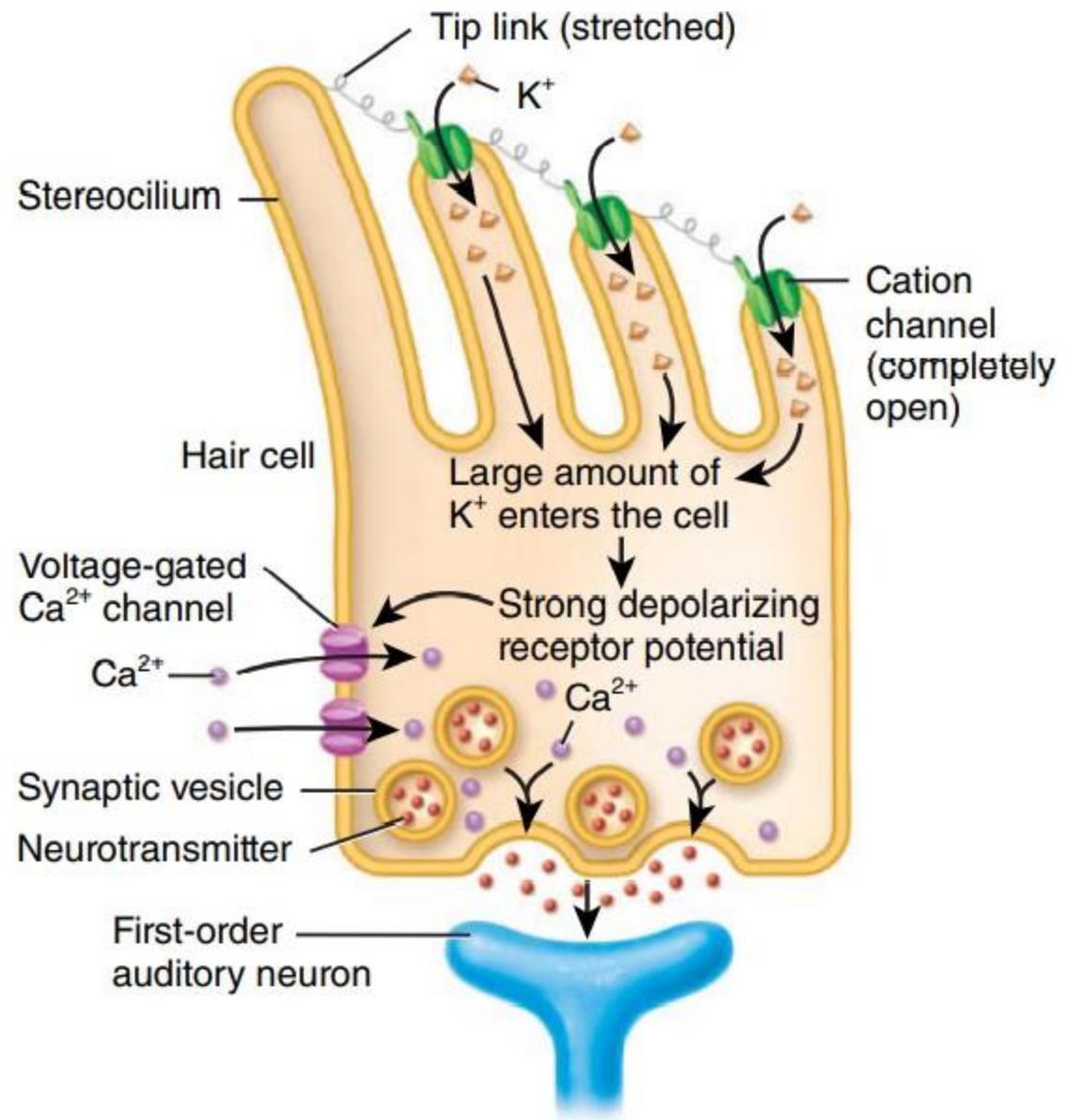
Sensory receptors

- The types of sensory receptors according to the type of stimulus:
- (1) **mechanoreceptors**, which detect mechanical compression or stretching of the receptor or of tissues adjacent to the receptor.



(c) Position of macula with head upright (left) and tilted forward (right)

(b) Details of two hair cells



(b) Strongly depolarized hair cell

Sensory receptors

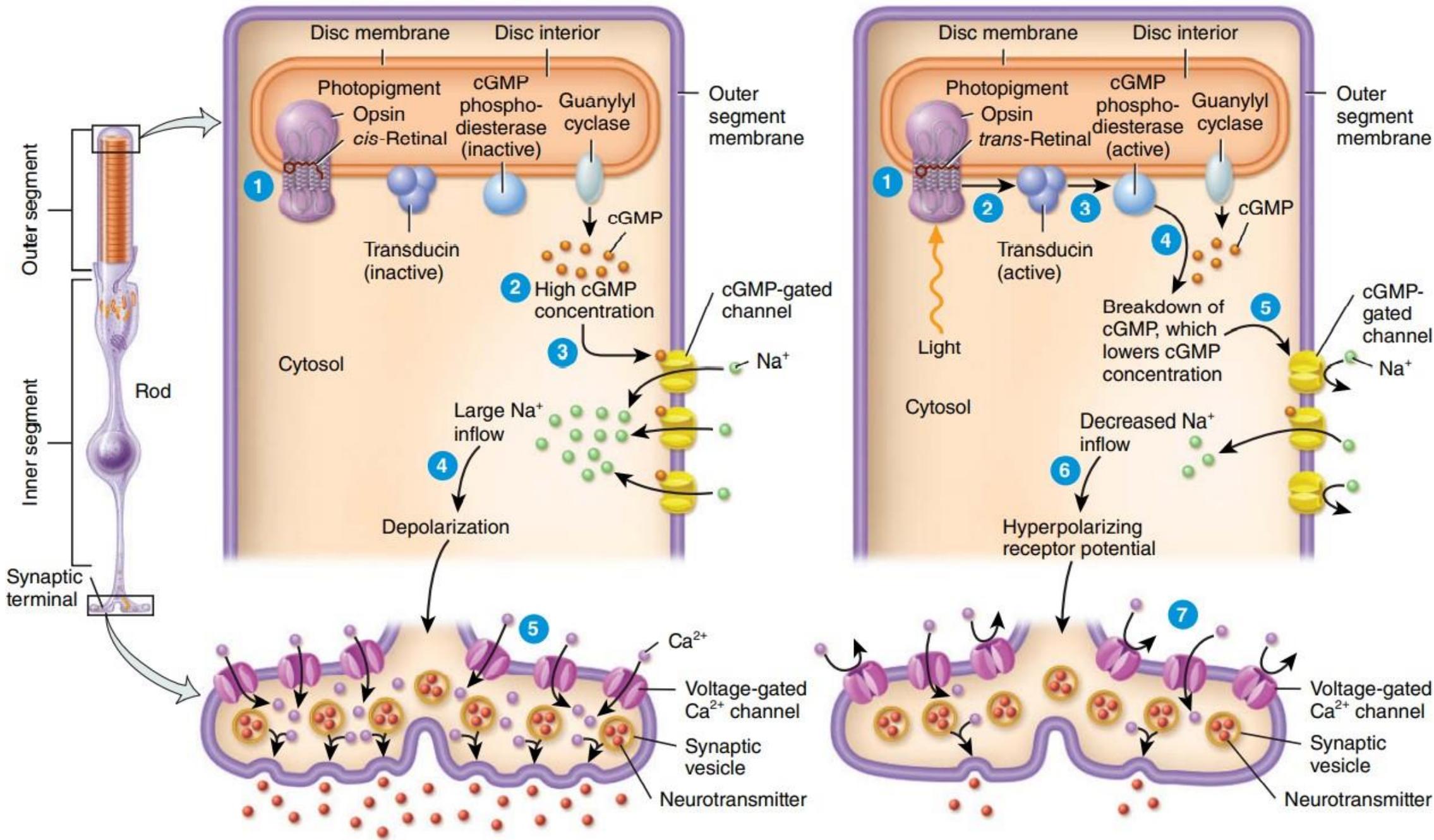
- (2) **thermoreceptors**, which detect changes in temperature, with some receptors detecting cold and others warmth.

Sensory receptors

- (3) **nociceptors** (pain receptors), which detect physical or chemical damage occurring in the tissues.

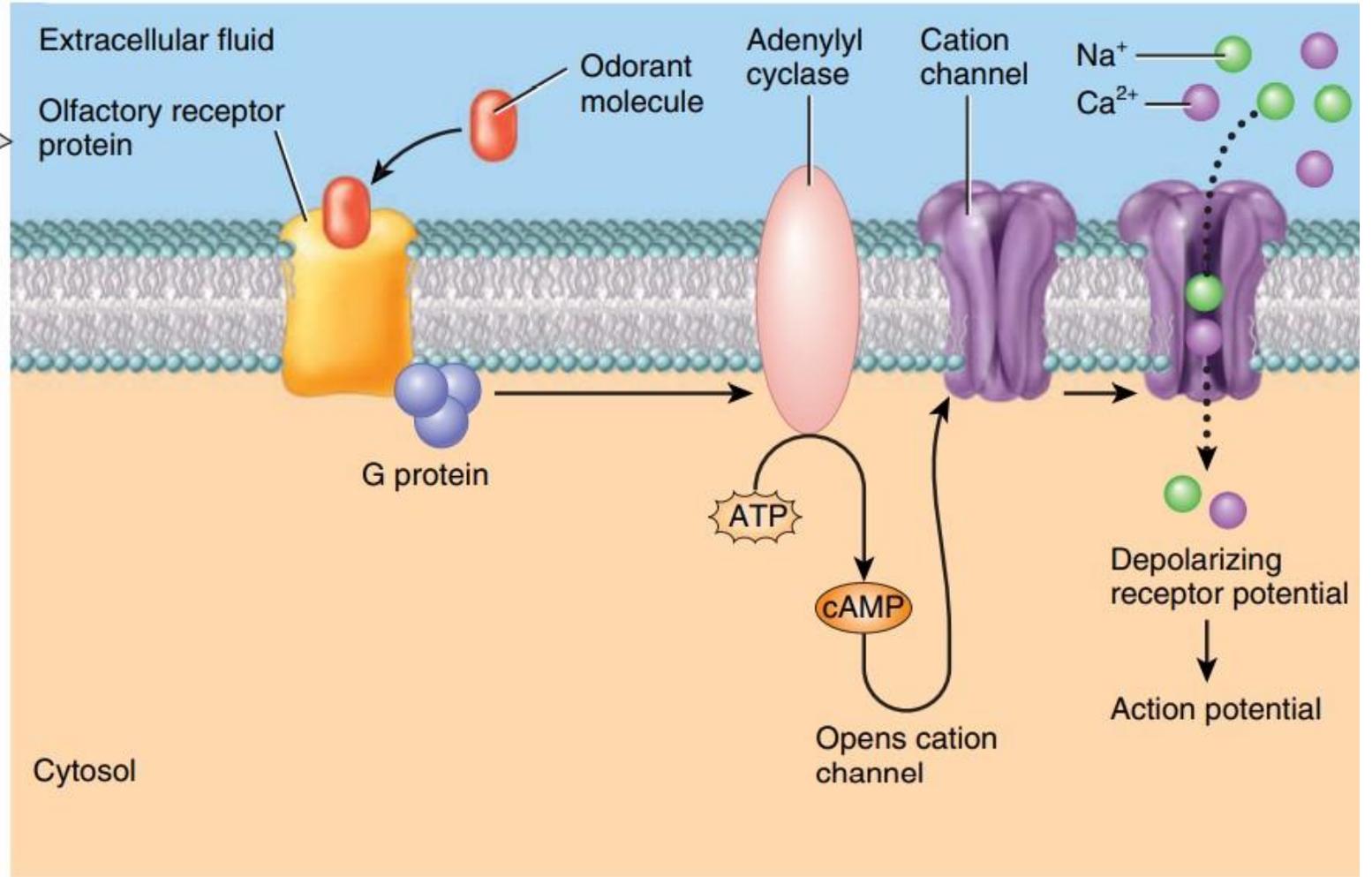
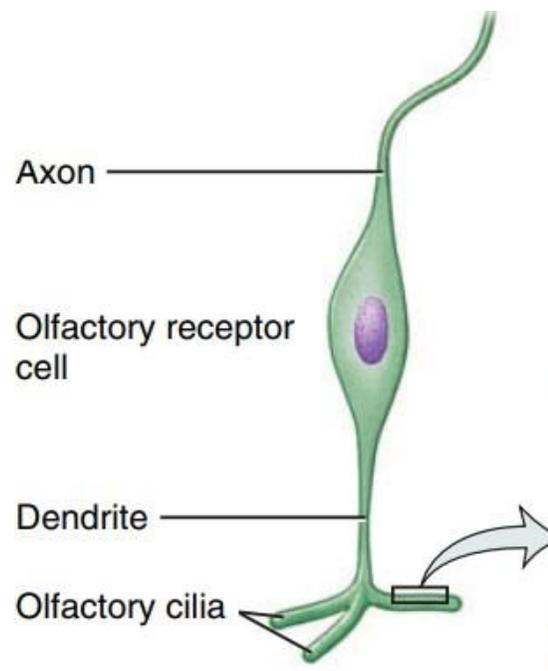
Sensory receptors

- (4) **electromagnetic receptors**, which detect light on the retina.



Sensory receptors

- (5) **chemoreceptors**, which detect taste, smell, oxygen level in the arterial blood, osmolality of the body fluids.



5) Some characteristics of sensory receptors.

Differential sensitivity of sensory receptors

- **Each type of receptor is highly sensitive to one type of stimulus** for which it is designed and yet is almost nonresponsive to other types of sensory stimuli.
- For example, the osmoreceptors of the supraoptic nuclei in the hypothalamus detect minute changes in the osmolality of the body fluids but have never been known to respond to sound.

The labeled-line principle

- Despite the fact that we experience different modalities of sensation, nerve fibers transmit only impulses.
- Each nerve tract terminates at a specific point in the central nervous system, and the type of sensation felt when a nerve fiber is stimulated is determined by the point in the nervous system to which the fiber leads.
- Fibers from the retina of the eye terminate in the vision areas of the brain, fibers from the ear terminate in the auditory areas of the brain.

The labeled-line principle

- If a pain fiber is stimulated, the person perceives pain regardless of what type of stimulus excites the fiber. The stimulus can be electricity, overheating of the fiber, crushing of the fiber, or stimulation of the pain nerve ending by damage to the tissue cells. In all these instances, the person perceives pain.
- The specificity of nerve fibers for transmitting only one modality of sensation is called the **labeled line principle**.