

Glossary of Neuroscience Terminology

- **Allodynia:** pain produced by a normally innocuous stimulus
- **Central sensitization:** an increase in the excitability of neurons within the central nervous system, so that normal inputs begin to produce abnormal responses. Can be triggered by persistent activity in nociceptors
- **Descending pathways:** serotonergic and noradrenergic fibres projecting from the brain to the spinal cord. Changes in descending control of spinal cord electrophysiological events can determine the extent of pain signal that ascends to conscious perception
- **Dysaesthesia:** an unpleasant, abnormal sense of touch
- **Hyperalgesia:** increased perceived intensity of painful sensations
- **Neuropathic pain:** persistent pain following injury to the nervous system
- **Nociceptor:** pain sensing primary afferent nerve fibre
- **Paraesthesia:** tingling, pricking, 'pins and needles' sensation
- **Paroxysmal pain:** bursts of pain not linked to a stimulus, but occurring spontaneously in damaged nerves
- **Peripheral sensitization:** reduction in threshold and increase in responsiveness of the peripheral ends of nociceptors. Can be triggered by inflammatory chemicals or mediators present in damaged or inflamed tissue
- **Proprioception:** sense of relative position of body parts and strength of effort employed in movement
- **Quantitative sensory testing:** a range of stimuli covering many sensory modalities systematically applied in a clinical research setting to investigate the nature and extent of a patient's loss or gain of sensory function
- **Referred pain:** persistent pain in an area remote from that affected by pathology. Thought to be a product of primary afferent sensory nerve fibres from the areas in question converging on common projection neurons in the spinal cord
- **Temporal summation:** the phenomenon whereby a given defined painful stimulus presented