

Touch with your hands and mouth

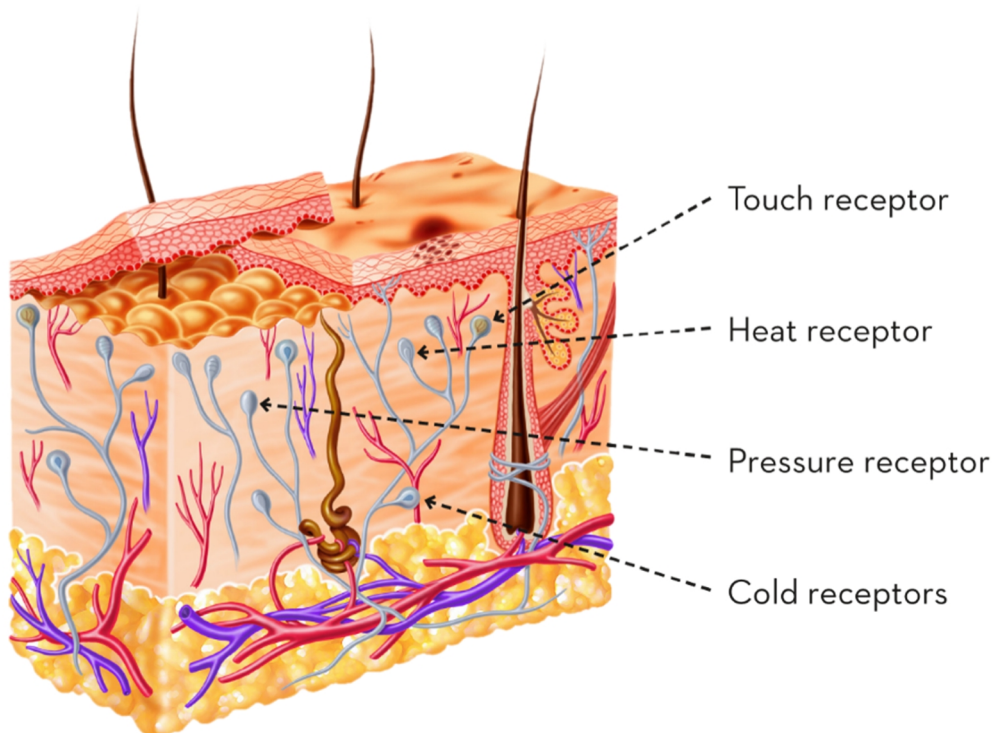
PHYSICAL STIMULI

Just like sight and hearing, **touch** is a sense of **physical** perception.

When your body enters into contact with food, your sense of touch gives you information about some of its characteristics. Some of these characteristics are also perceived by your sense of sight. Nevertheless, if you feel food with your hands while keeping your eyes closed, you will still be able to tell its **shape**, **size** and **texture**.

MECHANORECEPTORS

Touch receptors are known as 'mechanoreceptors'.

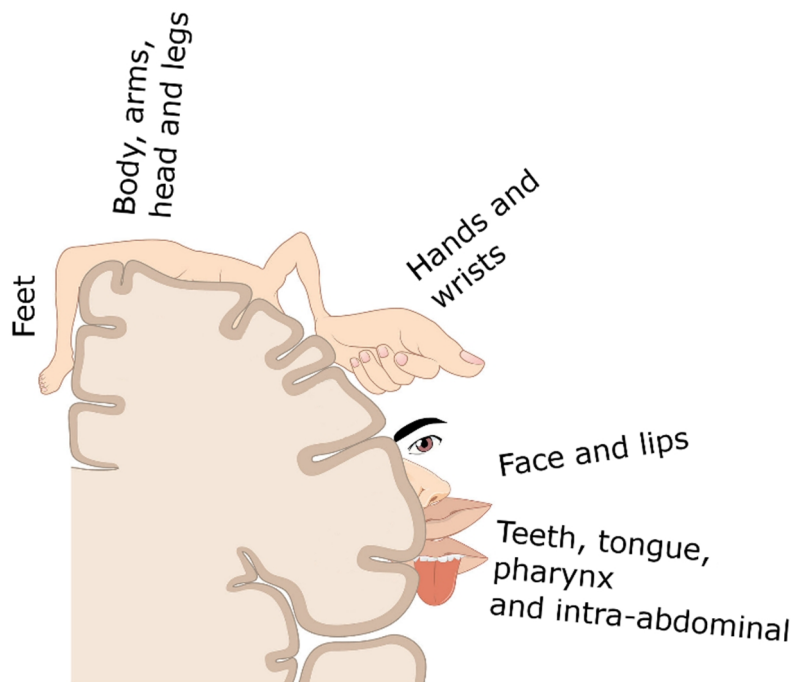


These turn physical stimuli into information which is transmitted to the brain.

They are sensitive to pressure and contact with food. By applying pressure you can, for example, tell how ripe a piece of fruit or cheese is, and by touching a piece of fruit, you can tell how soft its skin is.

Your hands play an important role in touch, but other parts of the body also have touch receptors – especially your mouth.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR MOUTH AND TONGUE



This diagram shows the surface of the primary somatosensory cortex, which is the area of the brain dedicated to tactile information coming from the various parts of the body. It demonstrates the importance of the mouth and the tongue for the sense of touch.

TEXTURE

The mouth gives a large amount of information about food. It gives us details about the shape, size and texture of the food. We can also perceive food as being mostly smooth, grainy, soft or hard.

Keywords > Smooth, grainy, soft, hard, slippery, rough, fibrous, sandy, crumbly, melting, brittle, puffy, juicy, viscous, rubbery, sticky, gluey, crunchy, etc.

The texture is a determining factor in how we enjoy some food such as meat, where tenderness is an essential criterion.

Texture is also cultural. In Western countries, **viscous food** and **rubbery food** may be none too appealing. In some parts of Asia **sticky rice** is prized, which is not the case in Europe. Inuits and Argentinians prefer their food **chewy**, requiring lots of mastication. Mexicans and many Africans prefer a **softer** consistency. In Europe, every region has its own type of bread. Northern Europeans prefer their bread **soft**, while in the South, people enjoy a **crusty** loaf – hence the success of French baguettes.