

# History Taking of Neurological Complaints

## HPI

1) If the complaint is **headache**, ask:

- Where did they feel the pain? Was it unilateral or all over?
- Was the onset sudden/abrupt or gradual/evolving?
- Character of pain? For example, stabbing, tightness, dullness, etc.
- Does the pain radiate anywhere else such as the neck or jaw?
- When did it start?
- Is it persistent or intermittent?
- If persistent, does it get better, worse, or stay the same?
- If intermittent, how long does each episode last? How many times does it occur (frequency)? How long does the patient remain symptom-free between episodes?
- Does anything make the symptoms better or worse such as time of day, menstrual cycle, posture, or medication?
- Does the headache wake the patient from sleep?
- How does the patient react when they have a headache? Do they seek a bed in a dark quiet room? Do they start pacing around the room agitated and keep banging their head?
- Severity (1-10)
- Associated symptoms:  Nausea  Vomiting  Photophobia  
 Phonophobia  Neck stiffness  Fever  Rash  Tearing  
 Conjunctival injection  Nasal stuffiness  Jaw pain on chewing  
 Visual disturbances  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2)** If the complaint is **disturbance of consciousness**, ask:

- Was it triggered by anything like pain, emotion, or intercurrent illness?
- Does the patient lose consciousness when standing?
- Does the patient take antihypertensives or levodopa?
- Does the patient have DM?
- Were there any preceding symptoms such as palpitations, chest pain, lightheadedness, nausea, tinnitus, sweating, or visual disturbance?
- Were any injuries sustained?
- If a witness is present, ask them about:
  - The appearance of the patients skin color during unconsciousness, was it pale or grey?
  - The duration of loss of consciousness and time until recovery to full consciousness and normal cognition.

**3)** If the complaint is **seizure**, ask:

- Did the patient lose consciousness? How long were they unconscious?
- Were there any triggers such as pain, sleep deprivation, or illness?
- Were there any preceding symptoms such as lightheadedness, nausea, vision dimming, or tinnitus?
- How often do they occur (frequency)?
- How long did the seizure last?
- Was the recovery rapid or gradual (over 30 minutes)? Did the patient get up confused or agitated?
- Sustained injuries:
  - Headache   Back pain   Shoulder fracture/dislocation
  - Biting of the tongue (tip of tongue / lateral tongue)   Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- If a witness is present, ask them about:
  - The appearance of the patients skin during seizure, was it pale, grey, flushed, or cyanosed?
  - The occurrence of spasms, involuntary movements, waxing and waning consciousness, pelvic thrusting, lip smacking, or swallowing.

4) If the complaint is **stroke** or **TIA**, ask:

- Does the patient use anticoagulants?
- Associated symptoms:
  - Headache    Vomiting    Seizures    Early reduced consciousness
  - Weakness    Loss of sensation    Slurred speech    Palpitations
  - Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- How long did it take for the symptoms to resolve (more or less than 24 hours)?

5) If the complaint is **dizziness** or **vertigo**, ask:

- How long do symptoms last? Seconds, minutes, or hours?
- Associated symptoms:
  - Hearing loss    Tinnitus    Nausea    Vomiting    Headache
  - Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- Describe the dizziness, did the patient feel as though they were moving, or the world was moving around them?
- Do symptoms increase when sleeping on the affected side or with movement?

### **Past Medical History**

Ask about:

- History of previous visual loss such as optic neuritis.
- Conditions associated with vascular disease such as hypertension and diabetes mellitus.

### **Family History**

Ask about:

- Ask if anyone in the family has had any neurologic conditions in the past.
- Inherited disorders including epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and migraine.

## **Social History**

Ask about:

- How do the symptoms affect their daily lives? Are they able to work and drive?
- What is their diet like? Do they have a vitamin deficiency?
- Occupational exposure to heavy or organic metals such as lead or manganese.
- Detailed smoking history.
- Alcohol intake and IV drug use.
- Recent travel history.