

Gerstmann syndrome is a rare neurological disorder that can occur as the result of a brain injury or as a developmental disorder. The syndrome is characterized by the loss or absence of four cognitive abilities- the loss of the ability to express thoughts in writing (agraphia, dysgraphia), to perform simple arithmetic problems (acalculia), to recognize or indicate one's own or another's fingers (finger agnosia), and to distinguish between the right and left sides of one's body. Additional cognitive defects may occur in some cases. Gerstmann syndrome affects males and females in equal numbers. The incidence of Gerstmann syndrome in the general population is unknown. The disorder was first described by Dr. Josef Gerstmann, a Viennese neurologist, in 1924. The presence in the adult of all four neurological symptoms suggests a diagnosis of Gerstmann syndrome, especially when other causes of these symptoms are ruled out. Among children, most cases are recognized at school age when the affected person has difficulty in math and writing. Affected children may also have problems in spelling, performing the basic four mathematical calculations, and distinguishing left from right. Also, they generally fail the finger identification test. Many, but not all such children will find it difficult to copy simple drawings (constructional apraxia).