Health and illness

A

Asking about health

Health is the state of the body. When doctors want to know about a patient’s usual health, they ask questions such as:

- What is your general health like?
- How’s your health, generally?

If you are in good health, you are well and have no illness (disease). If you are healthy you are normally well and can resist illness. If you are fit, you are well and strong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient says</th>
<th>Possible meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was sick this morning.</td>
<td>I was ill this morning. I felt unwell this morning. I vomited this morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel sick.</td>
<td>I feel ill. I feel unwell. I am nauseous. I feel the need to vomit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combination sickness and diarrhoea means vomiting and diarrhoea.

B

Sickness

Sickness has a similar meaning to illness. It is also used in the names of a few specific diseases, for example sleeping sickness and travel sickness. Patients also talk about sickness when they mean nausea and vomiting.

C

Recovery

When patients return to normal health after illness, they have recovered. We can also say:

| The patient | made a good full complete recovery. |

If a patient’s health is in the process of returning to normal, the patient is improving. The opposite is deteriorating. We can also say that the patient’s condition improved or deteriorated.

In speech, we often use the verb get to talk about change:

- get over (an illness) = to recover
- get better = to improve
- get worse = to deteriorate

If a patient is better, but then gets worse again, the patient has relapsed. Another word for improvement, especially in recurring conditions such as cancer, is remission.

He got over the illness very quickly. Two years later she remains in complete remission.
1.1 Complete the table with words from A and B opposite. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fitness</td>
<td>fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sickness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Make word combinations using a word from each box. Look at B and C opposite to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>complete</th>
<th>sickness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>feel</td>
<td>health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get</td>
<td>remission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travel</td>
<td>over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 Complete the conversation. Look at B opposite to help you.

Doctor: How are you feeling today?
Patient: Not very (1) ____________ .
Doctor: How long have you been feeling (2) ____________ ?
Patient: About a week.
Doctor: What is your (3) ____________ like normally?
Patient: Very good. I'm usually quite (4) ____________ and (5) ____________ .
Doctor: What is the problem now?
Patient: It's my stomach.
Doctor: Do you feel (6) ____________ ?
Patient: Yes.
Doctor: Have you actually been (7) ____________ ?
Patient: No.
Doctor: Have you had any serious (8) ____________ in the past?
Patient: No, none at all.

1.4 Choose the correct word to complete each sentence. Look at B and C opposite to help you.

1. Her condition ____________ (deteriorated/improved) and she died.
2. He ____________ (relapsed/recovered) and was allowed to go home from hospital.
3. The cause of sleeping ____________ (illness/sickness) was discovered in 1901.
4. The patient made a full ____________ (remission/recovery).
5. I have been in ____________ (poor/good) health for months and feel very fit.
6. It was a month before I ____________ (got over / got better) the illness.
7. He seems to be rather ____________ (unhealthy/unwell) – his diet is bad and he never exercises.

Over to you

What advice do you give people for keeping fit and well?
Limb means arm (upper limb) or leg (lower limb). The trunk is the body excluding the head and limbs.

For a more detailed diagram showing parts of the body, see Appendix I on page 00.

### Referring to parts of the body

When patients speak about their problem they often refer to a part of the body:

- I’m having trouble with my hip, shoulder, knee.

The doctor often needs to ask about a part of the body:

- Do you get any pain in your chest? Stomach? Back?

### Describing radiation of pain

A patient is telling the doctor about his back pain and the parts of the body it radiates to.

- It starts in the back. Then it seems to go into the right buttock and down the back of the right thigh to the knee.
2.1 Write the ordinary English words for the corresponding anatomical terms in the table using your medical knowledge. Look at A opposite to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anatomical term</th>
<th>Common word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abdomen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>axilla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carpus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coxa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cubitus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mamma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patella</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Complete the sentences using ordinary English words. Look at A and C opposite to help you.

a A male patient describing angina pectoris:

It's like a tightness across my (1) _______________ , and it goes up (2) _______________ my (3) _______________ and into my left (4) _______________ and (5) _______________ , the left (6) _______________ .

b A male patient describing renal colic:

It starts (1) _______________ the loin and goes into the (2) _______________ and (3) _______________ into the testicle.

2.3 Complete the sentences. Look at A opposite to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anatomical term</th>
<th>Patient's statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 inguinal swelling</td>
<td>I've got a lump in the _______________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 abdominal pain</td>
<td>My little boy's got a ________________ ache.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 periumbilical rash</td>
<td>I've got some spots around my ____________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 thoracic pain</td>
<td>I've got a pain in the middle of the ______________ .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 enlarged axillary node</td>
<td>There's a painful swelling in my ______________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 mandibular pain</td>
<td>I've got a pain in my ________________ .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Complete the table with words from the box. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trunk</th>
<th>Upper limb</th>
<th>Lower limb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>abdomen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knee</td>
<td></td>
<td>elbow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>loin</td>
<td>wrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>thigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>chest</td>
<td>arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>finger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Over to you

Make a list of the words from A opposite that you find it hard to remember or that you need most often. Try to learn at least one of them every day.
Parts of the body 2

A The abdomen

The main organs of the body have ordinary English names and doctors use these words. But when an adjective is needed they often use an anatomical word. For example, we can say disease of the liver or hepatic disease. Some abdominal organs, for example the pancreas, have no ordinary name.

When doctors talk about the main parts of the digestive system, they use the words bowel or intestine: the small intestine or the small bowel, the large intestine or the large bowel. When speaking to patients, doctors may refer to the anus and rectum as the back passage.

B The chest

The chest (thorax) contains the organs of respiration and the heart. The main parts of the respiratory system are the airways and the lungs. The left lung is divided into two lobes, and the right into three. The airways consist of the larynx, the trachea (or windpipe), the right and left bronchus, and the bronchioles. The chest is separated from the abdomen by the diaphragm.

C The pelvis

A doctor is explaining the function of the bladder to a patient.

The bladder is situated in the pelvis, as you know, and it is connected to each kidney by a long tube called the ureter – one on each side. The ureters carry the urine from the kidneys to the bladder, where it is stored until you decide to empty your bladder. When that happens, the urine passes down another tube, called the urethra, to the outside.
3.1 Label the diagram using words from the box. Look at B opposite to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>diaphragm</th>
<th>lobes</th>
<th>windpipe</th>
<th>heart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lung</td>
<td>airways</td>
<td>bronchioles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ___________
2. ___________
3. ___________
4. ___________

5. ___________
6. ___________
7. ___________

3.2 Match the conditions (1–8) with the organs affected (a–h), using your medical knowledge.

1. hepatitis  
   a. bladder  
2. pneumonia  
   b. gall bladder  
3. nephritis  
   c. heart  
4. gastric ulcer  
   d. kidney  
5. cystitis  
   e. liver  
6. angina pectoris  
   f. lung  
7. cholecystitis  
   g. stomach  
8. ulcerative colitis  
   h. large bowel

3.3 Complete the textbook extract. Look at A and C opposite to help you.

**Examination of the abdomen**

To examine the patient for enlarged abdominal (1)………………….., first feel for the (2)………………….. and the (3)………………….. on the right side. To do this, ask the patient to take a deep breath, while pressing with the fingers upwards and inwards. Next, feel for the right (4)………………….. and then cross over to the other side for the left (5)………………….. . Still on the left side, palpate for an enlarged (6)………………….. . Finally, moving to the lower abdomen, feel for the (8)………………….., which is only felt if it is full.

**Over to you**

Many patients do not know the location or function of the spleen or the pancreas. How would you explain them to a patient, in English?
Functions of the body

A Eating

You’re hungry. You’re in a restaurant and the waiter brings your food.

You smell it. It stimulates your appetite – you want to eat. Your mouth waters, filling with saliva.

You take a bite of the food. It tastes good and you chew it and swallow it.

You eat more, but then suddenly you feel nauseous. You rush to the toilet, and get there just in time before vomiting all the food you’ve eaten. Something has disagreed with you.

B The five senses

In addition to smell and taste, the senses include sight (or vision), hearing, and touch (also called sensation or feeling). To ask about the senses, doctors use the questions:

What is your sight like? Is your sense of smell normal? Have you noticed any numbness (in your fingers or toes)?

To ask about the sense of touch, doctors talk about numbness (loss of sensation):

C Other functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>speak</td>
<td>speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walking</td>
<td>walk</td>
<td>gait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breathing</td>
<td>inhale / breathe in / take a breath in</td>
<td>breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respiration</td>
<td>exhale / breathe out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urination</td>
<td>urinate</td>
<td>urine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>micturition</td>
<td>micturate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pass urine / pass water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defecation</td>
<td>defecate</td>
<td>faeces / stools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pass faeces / pass stools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>menstruation</td>
<td>menstruate</td>
<td>(menstrual) period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have a period</td>
<td>(monthly) period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When taking a history, doctors can ask:

Do you have any trouble difficulty problems? walking? breathing? passing urine? with your speech? pain when you breathe in?

When auscultating a patient’s lungs, the doctor tells the patient: Take a deep breath in, hold your breath, then breathe out completely.

D Less common functions

There are some things we do less often. When we are hot, we sweat. When we are nervous, we shake. When we are sad, we cry.

Doctors can ask:

Do you sweat shake more than usual?
4.1 Match the symptoms (1–5) to the questions (a–e), using your medical knowledge.

1 dysuria  a What is your breathing like?
2 dysphagia  b Do you have any pain when you pass water?
3 diplopia  c Do you have any difficulty with your speech?
4 dysphasia  d Do you have any trouble swallowing?
5 dyspnoea  e Is your vision normal?

4.2 Patients are describing symptoms of the conditions shown in brackets. Complete the sentences. Look at C and D opposite to help you.

1 I've got pain and ____________ in both feet. (peripheral neuropathy)
2 I'm having difficulty ____________ solid food. (oesophageal stricture)
3 I have a lot of problems ____________ (prostatic hypertrophy)
4 I've been ____________ more than usual, even when it's not hot. (hyperthyroidism)
5 I've noticed that my hands ____________ when I'm not using them. (Parkinsonism)
6 I have trouble ____________ when I climb the stairs. (left heart failure)

4.3 Complete the sentences. Look at A, B, C and D opposite to help you.

1 When I eat solid food, I have to ____________ (bite/chew) it for a long time before I can ____________ (swallow/eat) it.

2 Do you have any pain when you ____________ (pass/have) stools?

3 I have no ____________ (taste/appetite) and I've lost five kilos in the last few weeks.

4 When did you last ____________ (have/pass) a period?

5 The garden is full of flowers, but my ____________ (sense/sensation) of smell has disappeared and I can't enjoy the perfume.

6 Take a deep ____________ (breathe/breath) in.

Over to you

You think a patient may have diabetes. Think of five questions you can ask the patient to investigate further. Try to use the question types presented in this unit.
Practitioners

In Britain, doctors, also known as medical practitioners, must be qualified: have a university degree in medicine. They must also be registered – included in the General Medical Council’s list, or register – in order to practise (see Unit 13). A doctor who treats patients, as opposed to one who only does research, is called a clinician. A doctor who provides primary care for patients is known as a general practitioner (GP), or family doctor. GPs usually work in a group practice. Larger group practices work in a building called a health centre.

Note: In British English, the verb is spelt practise and the noun is spelt practice.

Specialties

Specialist doctors, for example paediatricians, generally work in hospitals. However, those who work outside the NHS, providing private health care, may have consulting rooms outside a hospital – for example in the famous Harley Street in London.

The two main branches of medicine are surgery and internal medicine, and the doctors who practise these branches are called surgeons and physicians, respectively. In Britain, male surgeons are addressed as Mr and females as Ms – so Dr Smith is a physician, and Ms Smith is a surgeon.

A cardiologist specializes in diseases of the heart and circulation, or cardiology.
A geriatrician is a specialist in diseases of elderly patients, or geriatrics.
An anaesthetist is an anaesthetist.

Note: Names of specialties usually end in -ology; names of specialists usually end in -ologist. If the name of a specialty ends in -ies, the name of the specialist ends in -ician. There are some exceptions, e.g. anaesthesics and anaesthetist.

Choosing a specialty

Jill Mathews has just graduated from medical school and is talking about her future.

‘I haven’t decided what to specialize in yet. I need more experience before I decide, but I’m quite attracted to the idea of paediatrics because I like working with children. I’d certainly prefer to work with children than, say, elderly patients – so I don’t fancy geriatrics. I was never very interested in detailed anatomy, so the surgical specialties like neurosurgery don’t really appeal. You have to be good with your hands, which I don’t think is a problem for me – I’ve assisted at operations several times, and I’ve even done some minor ops by myself – but surgeons have to be able to do the same thing again and again without getting bored, like tying off cut arteries and so on. I don’t think that would be a problem for me, but they need to make decisions fast and I’m not too good at that. I like to have time to think, which means surgery’s probably not right for me.’

Note: The collocation good with is followed by a noun – He’s good with children. The collocation good at is followed by the -ing form (gerund) of a verb, or by a noun – She’s good at explaining procedures. She’s good at explanations.
5.1 Write sentences to describe the work of the specialist in each branch of medicine. Look at B opposite to help you.

1 dermatology A dermatologist specializes in diseases of the skin.
2 rheumatology
3 traumatology
4 paediatrics
5 obstetrics

5.2 Complete the table with words from A, B and C opposite and related forms. Put a stress mark in front of the stressed syllable in each word. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun (person)</th>
<th>Noun (activity or thing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>specialize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qualify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Find prepositions in C opposite that can be used to make word combinations with the words in the box. Then use the correct forms of the words to complete the sentences.

1 A pathologist ___________ diagnosing disease through examining cells and tissue.
2 A paediatrician must enjoy ___________ children.
3 An oncologist is ___________ the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.
4 A psychiatrist must be ___________ counselling.
5 A neurosurgeon must be ___________ her hands.

5.4 Make word combinations using a word from each box. Two words can be used twice. Look at A, B and C opposite to help you.

consulting, general, group, health, internal, surgical, centre, practice, specialties, medicine, practitioner, rooms

**Over to you**

Re-read what Dr Jill Mathews says about surgeons in Section C. Make a list of the qualities she thinks are needed to be a good surgeon. Then make a similar list of qualities for another specialty.

If you are a student, which branch of medicine do you think you have the qualities for? If you have already completed your training, why did you choose your particular branch of medicine?