

Illness and pain

Upper-intermediate

1 Doctor, doctor.....

Look at the descriptions of illnesses below. Can you diagnose what is probably wrong with each patient?

- 1 I can hardly speak or *swallow* anything because *my glands are so swollen*. I feel terrible.
- 2 I feel really *weak and dizzy*. I keep *shivering*. I have a really high temperature and I *ache* all over.
- 3 I hate the summer. Every time I go out my eyes *stream with tears*, I get a *runny* nose, and I can't stop *coughing* and *sneezing*.
- 4 I'm all *blocked up*. I feel dreadful.
- 5 I've been *throwing up* all morning and I *can't keep anything down*. I feel really awful.
- 6 I feel *feverish*. I'm covered in a *rash* of red spots. And they're *really itchy*. I can't help *scratching*.

2 Match the words

Look at the words in italics in the descriptions in exercise 1. Connect them to the part of the body they are referring to:

throat
head

skin
the whole body

nose
eyes

stomach

Which three words in the descriptions mean *very bad*?

3 Discussion

Look at the underlined phrases and the words in italics in the descriptions in exercise 1. Imagine that you have a mysterious illness. Prepare a description. Describe it to your partner. What does he/she think you should do?

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4 Word classification

Look at how the words *pain*, *ache* and *hurt* are used in the three sentences below:

- I've got backache
- My back *hurts*
- I've got a *pain* in my back

1. Which of the words is a verb?
2. Which one works as a suffix?

Look at the words below. Which of the words above can be used to describe pain in these places?

For example, we often say *I have a headache*, we sometimes say *My head hurts*, but never say *I have a pain in my head*.

ear
leg

stomach
shoulder

eye
chest

5 Match the words

Look at these phrases that a doctor might say to a patient during an appointment. What is the doctor describing? Match the phrase on the left to the words on the right.

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Take this to the chemist's. | ointment |
| 2 | Pop this in your mouth for a moment. | pills |
| 3 | Take two twice a day. | medicine |
| 4 | You should rub it on your chest. | a hypochondriac |
| 5 | You won't feel a thing. | a stethoscope |
| 6 | Take a teaspoonful just before you go to bed. | a thermometer |
| 7 | Stop eating cheese. It brings you out in spots. | a prescription |
| 8 | I just need to check your lungs. Breathe in. | an injection |
| 9 | Don't come to see me, unless it's serious! | an allergy |

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6 Role play

Work in pairs. Imagine that one of you is a doctor, and the other a patient. Turn the situation into a role play.

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Teacher's notes - Illness and pain (Upper-intermediate)

- 1 Lead in by asking the students how they feel today. Does anybody feel ill or a bit under the weather? Ask any students who say yes to describe their symptoms. Show some imaginary sympathy.

Put the students in pairs to look at the descriptions of illnesses and guess which is being described. If your students find this difficult, you could write the names of the illnesses in random order on the board and ask students to guess from the list.

Answers

1. A very sore throat, so probably tonsillitis.
2. A very bad cold or probably flu (influenza).
3. Hay fever.
4. A bad cold.
5. A stomach bug or food poisoning.
6. Measles or chicken pox.

- 2 Put the students in pairs to match the words in italics with the part of the body they are referring to. In the feedback, use mime to check that they understand the words.

Answers

Throat:	<i>swallow, my glands are so swollen, coughing</i>
Skin:	<i>rash, really itchy, scratching</i>
Nose:	<i>runny, sneezing, blocked up</i>
Stomach:	<i>throwing up, can't keep anything down</i>
Head:	<i>weak and dizzy, feverish</i>
The whole body:	<i>shivering, ache, feverish</i>
Eyes:	<i>stream with tears</i>

NB: *Terrible, awful* and *dreadful* mean *very bad*

- 3 Give the students a few minutes to look at the underlined phrases and the words in italics, and to prepare a description of a mysterious illness. Ask them to describe it to their partner.

- 4 Read through the sentences with the students and ask them the questions.

Answers

Hurt is a verb here. Note, however, that *ache* can, less commonly, be used as a verb, for example, *my head aches*. *Ache* works as a suffix.

Read through the example, then put the students in pairs to guess which words are most commonly used with which part of the body. Note that this involves having a real feel for the language, so the students will probably not know many of the answers.

Suggested answers

Earache, my ear hurts, a pain in my ear are all possible, though the latter is less common.

Stomach ache, my stomach hurts and a pain in my stomach are all possible.

My eye hurts is common. The others are not used.

My leg hurts is common. A pain in my leg is possible but less common.

My shoulder hurts and a pain in my shoulder are possible.

A pain in my chest is most common. My chest hurts is possible. We often talk about chest pain(s).

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You may wish to point out that we use *ache* to describe a repetitive, throbbing pain which is not strong but won't go away. We use *pain* to describe a more specific pain in a part of our stomach, leg, shoulder, for example. It can be sharp and strong.

- 5 Put the students in pairs to match the phrase on the left to the words on the right. Do one as an example.

Answers

- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. a prescription | 2. a thermometer | 3. pills | 4. ointment |
| 5. an injection | 6. medicine | 7. an allergy | 8. a stethoscope |
| 9. a hypochondriac | | | |

- 6 Ask students to work in pairs to prepare a doctor/patient role play.

A good variation on this is to divide the class in half, so that half the students are doctors and half are patients. The patients must decide what is wrong with them and prepare to describe their symptoms. The doctors must think about what they are going to say. Get the students who are doctors to make a name card, *Doctor Pill*, for example, and sit in different parts of the classroom. The patients must visit a doctor and act out the appointment as a role play. When they have finished, ask them to stand up and visit another doctor for a second opinion. You can ask them to visit as many doctors as you have time available. In the feedback, find out which doctor gave the best advice.