

ESL Health Unit

Unit One The Doctor's Office

Lesson Two Describing Pain/Symptoms



<http://www.ranchosandiegodental.com/clipart%20and%20brochures/headache/clipart.jpg>

Reading and Writing Practice ***Intermediate***

Goals for this lesson:

Below are some of the goals of this lesson. Which ones are your goals too? Check (✓) them.

- discuss common health problems and symptoms
- use different words to accurately describe pain
- talk about past experiences
- describe your symptoms to a doctor
- prepare for your visit to the doctor so that you will be able to communicate more effectively

Lesson Two: Describing Pain/Symptoms

Reading and Writing Practice

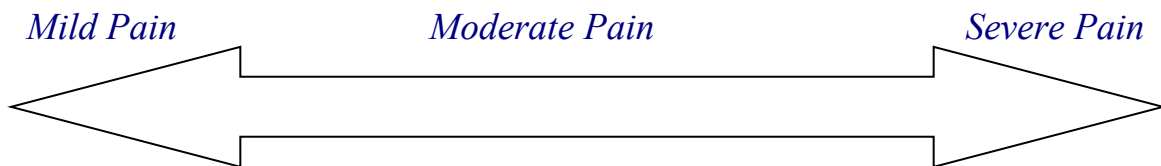
Before You Read!

In this lesson, you will read Nina's description of her headache symptoms. Before you read, complete the following activity with your classmates and your teacher.



*dull, burning, aching, stabbing,
throbbing, tingling, sore, stinging,
and sharp*

1. With your classmates and teacher, place the following words that describe pain on a continuum from mild pain to severe pain.



2. Now ask a partner about his or her past experience with headaches (or another pain he or she has experienced). Talk about your pain using the words above.

Reading Two - Describing the Symptoms of a Migraine Headache

Now you are going to read a story about Nina's migraine headache. Please read the story and then answer the questions with your classmates and your teacher.

“A few years ago I suffered from migraines. First my peripheral vision would become blurry. Then, I would get a stabbing pain in one of my temples. The pain would be intense. For four years I had a headache every day, but 3 to 4 days every month during the full moon, I had a severe headache. I could only lay in silence and darkness with my eyes closed, without movement. I couldn't eat or drink anything because I felt nauseous and threw up 4 to 5 times a day. I went to the doctor who checked my head. I took medicine. After four years, the headaches got weaker. Now some days pass when I don't have a headache. I have headaches when my blood pressure or the weather changes. This is a chronic condition. I hope I will not have headaches in the next life!”

Questions:

1. How strong is Nina's pain? On the scale below, place Nina's pain level.

0 ____ 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ 6 ____ 7 ____ 8 ____ 9 ____ 10 ____

No Pain

Mild

Moderate

Severe

2. What makes you think so? What describing words does Nina use to describe her symptoms?
3. Read through the text one more time. This time underline all of the action words, or verbs of the text. What do you notice about how Nina uses these verbs to help the reader understand the timeframe of her story? What other words or phrases does Nina use to help the reader understand the timeframe of the story?

“A few years ago I suffered from migraines. First my peripheral vision would become blurry. Then, I would get a stabbing pain in one of my temples. The pain would be intense. For four years I had a headache every day, but 3 to 4 days every month during the full moon, I had a severe headache. I could only lay in silence and darkness with my eyes closed, without movement. I couldn't eat or drink anything because I felt nauseous and threw up 4 to 5 times a day. I went to the doctor who checked my head. I took medicine. After four years, the headaches got weaker. **Now** some days pass when I don't have a headache. I have headaches when my blood pressure or the weather changes. This is a chronic condition. I hope I will not have headaches in the next life!”

Grammar Tip: Using the Simple Past Tense to Tell Stories

When telling stories in English, we most often use the simple past tense. The *regular* simple past is formed by adding "ED" to the base form of the verb. (Base: walk + ED = walked)

The *irregular* simple past is left up to the irregular verb to decide. Irregular verbs must be memorized and used until they are learned. There are many lists of irregular verbs in English. You can learn a few every week until you know the most common ones.

Example:

go -- went

speak -- spoke

give -- gave

Pronouncing "ED" Endings

Many people have had great difficulty pronouncing the /ed/ at the end of regular verbs in the past.

There are three pronunciations for the regular past tense ending "ED."

/t/ (unvoiced) - if the base form ends in an unvoiced sound. Example: "work" (/k/ is unvoiced) becomes "worked," pronounced "work /t/."

/d/ (voiced) - if the base form ends in a voiced sound. Example: "name" (/m/ is a voiced sound) becomes "named," pronounced "name /d/."

/ɪd/ (syllable) - if the base form ends in /t/ or /d/. Example: "rate" (/t/) becomes "rated," pronounced "rate /ɪd/"; "mend" (/d/) becomes "mended," pronounced "mend /ɪd/."

Health Watch

Just Relax! Tips for Handling Headaches

The National Headache Foundation estimates that 28 million Americans suffer from **migraines**. One cause of migraines and other types of headaches is believed to be stress. Because stress can make any headache worse, it is important to learn how to relax.

What Are Some Techniques You Can Use to Relax?

In order to learn how to relax, you need to become familiar with your own breathing patterns and change them in ways that will help you relax. Below are a few relaxation exercises. But first, be sure that you have a quiet location that is free of distractions, a comfortable body position, and a good state of mind. Try to block out worries and distracting thoughts.

Rhythmic breathing: If your breathing is too fast, slow it down by taking long, slow breaths. Inhale slowly then exhale slowly. Count slowly to five as you inhale, and then count slowly to five as you exhale. As you exhale slowly, pay attention to how your body naturally relaxes.

Recognizing this change will help you to relax even more.

Deep breathing: Imagine a spot just below your navel. Breathe into that spot, filling your abdomen with air. Let the air fill you from the abdomen

up, then let it out, like deflating a balloon. With every long, slow exhalation, you should feel more relaxed.

Progressive muscle relaxation: Switch your thoughts to yourself and your breathing. Take a few deep breaths, exhaling slowly. Mentally scan your body. Notice areas that feel tense or cramped. Quickly loosen up these areas. Let go of as much tension as you can. Rotate your head in a smooth, circular motion once or twice. (Stop any movements that cause pain!) Roll your shoulders forward and backward several times. Let all of your muscles completely relax. Recall a pleasant thought for a few seconds. Take another deep breath and exhale slowly. You should feel relaxed.

Relax to music: Combine relaxation exercises with your favorite music in the background. Select the type of music that lifts your mood or that you find soothing or calming.

How do you relax? Talk about some of the things you do to relax with your classmates and teacher!

Adapted from medical information from The Cleveland Clinic.

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Listening and Speaking Practice Intermediate

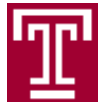
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Below are some of the goals of this lesson. Which ones are your goals too? Check (✓) them.

- list common health problems and symptoms
- use different words to describe pain
- describe your symptoms to a doctor
- prepare for your visit to the doctor

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Listening and Speaking Practice

Before You Listen!

Read through a doctor's description of conversations he had with two of his patients and discuss the questions with your classmates and instructor.

Sasha was quite **anxious** about his visit. He doesn't seem to like **health care** professionals. He came in because he sometimes feels **throbbing pain** in his head. He has taken **medication** in the past for high blood pressure but doesn't remember the dose. He says that he doesn't smoke, drink **caffeine** or take any **over-the-counter drugs**. He thought his pain might be related to **stress** or mild **depression** but wanted to see someone to **calm his nerves**. We had some problems **communicating effectively** because we didn't have an interpreter. It was very difficult for me to give Sasha helpful **instructions** or to **diagnose** his problem.

Hyuncheol had **concerns** about **symptoms** related to his diabetes. He said his blood sugar readings have been high after breakfast. He was well-organized and had a list of all of his **drugs, vitamins, herbal** and other **supplements**. He told me that he usually takes the drug *Micronase* after he eats breakfast. I explained that he should take it 30 minutes before breakfast. He agreed with this plan but would also like to see a diabetes **specialist** for a **second opinion**. He wanted to **take responsibility for his own healthcare**.

1. Which patient do you think is communicating better with his doctor? Why do you think so?
2. What are some things the poorly prepared patient can do to more effectively communicate with the doctor the next time he visits?
3. Read the following pairs of sentences. Which sentence would be more helpful to a doctor? Put a check next to that sentence.

I have a pain in my head.

I have a stabbing pain on the left side of my head.

I have a burning and sharp pain in my stomach.

I'm having some problems in my stomach.

My eye feels bad.

My vision is blurry and I have a sharp pain in my right eye.

My back is not feeling well.

I have a throbbing ache in my lower back.

There is an intense, shooting pain going down my left arm.

My left arm hurts.

Listening Two - Improve Your Communication with Your Doctor

Imagine you are attending a health workshop at a local senior center. Dr. Sam Fuentes is giving a talk about how to improve your communication with your doctor. Listen to Dr. Fuentes' talk and answer the questions with your classmates and instructor.

Questions:

1. What is important to do BEFORE you go to the doctor?
2. What is important to remember when you are describing your symptoms to your doctor?
3. What other kinds of information does your doctor need to help you?
4. In the country where you were born, did you feel comfortable talking with your doctor and asking questions?
5. In the country where you were born, did you feel comfortable disagreeing with your doctor or asking for a second opinion?

Improve Communication with Your Doctor

If you feel anxious or uncomfortable at your healthcare appointment, you may not be able to describe your symptoms clearly or to ask questions. This can result in problems because your doctor will not be able to diagnose your illness and help you.

To make yourself feel more comfortable, take the time to organize yourself before your doctor visits. This can help reduce at least some of your anxiety. Never be afraid to ask questions. Effective communication with your doctor is an important part of your health care.

Write down a list of your health concerns and give it to your doctor at the beginning of each appointment. List your most important concerns first.

Be clear and specific when talking about your symptoms.

– *Clearly state the purpose of your visit. Be specific.*

- **SAY:** “I’m here to see you today because, for the past two weeks, I’ve had a throbbing pain in the middle of my chest. It comes and goes. I just don’t feel right. Could it be my heart?”

DON’T SAY: “I am not feeling very well. I’ve been under a lot of stress lately.”

- SAY: “I get very tired going up the stairs. I’ve never had a problem climbing stairs before.”
- DON’T SAY: “I have no energy. I must be depressed.”

–Describe your symptoms until you are understood.

- SAY: “I’m not comfortable simply taking a medication to calm my nerves. Please refer me to a specialist who understands my needs. I must have further testing to ease my mind.”

DON’T STOP: Continue to seek care if you have a problem that needs a diagnosis, even if your doctor fails to find anything wrong or says it's just your nerves. If you feel you are not getting the care you deserve, you can obtain a second opinion or you can change doctors.

Keep a record of all the medicines and supplements you take and bring it with you to doctor appointments. Let all of your doctors and your pharmacist know about every medicine you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, herbals and other supplements.

Be honest about your health habits and be willing to make changes. Tell your health care professional if you don’t exercise regularly, eat all the wrong foods, drink too much caffeine or smoke cigarettes.

Get written instructions from your healthcare professional. You can ask for instructions in writing, you can take notes, or use a tape recorder. It may help to bring along a friend who can write down the doctor's instructions for you. Ask for an interpreter if English is not your primary language. Make sure you understand your diagnosis and the plan of care so that you can participate in regaining your health.

You are responsible for your own healthcare. Taking steps to improve communication with your doctor will result in better healthcare for you!

Talk About it!

Activity One:

When you go to the doctor, it is very important that you can describe your pain or symptoms clearly. Work with your classmates and instructor to think about the box below. Next to each body part, describe symptoms or pain that you (or someone you know) have experienced.

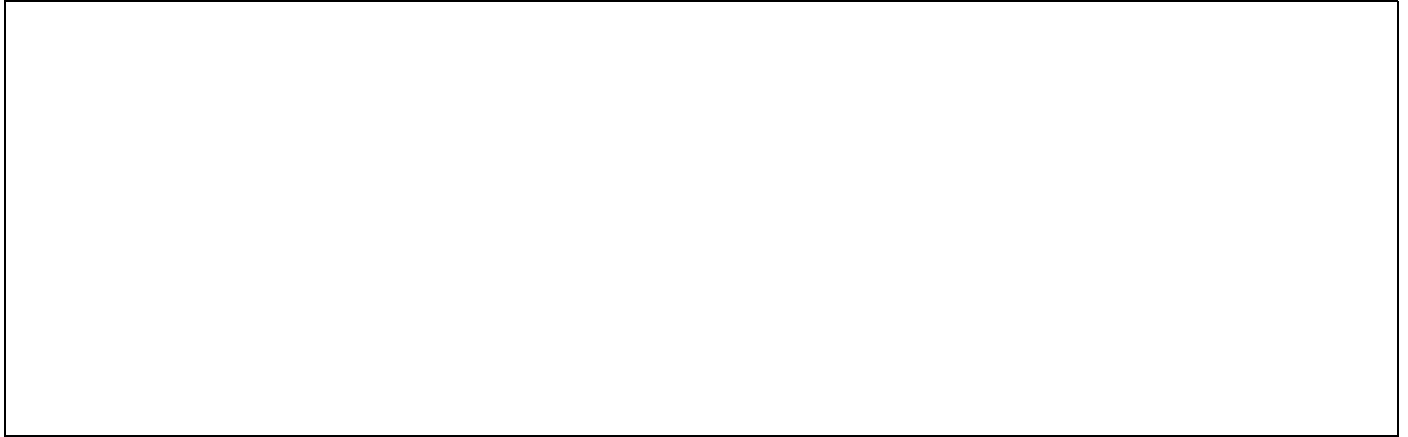
<i>Body Part</i>	<i>Description of Symptom or Pain</i>
Head (eyes, ears, nose)	<i>Example: Throbbing pain behind the eyes and near the temples. Severe pain when looking up or down.</i>
Skin	
Neck/back	
Chest	
Arm/hand	

Abdomen	
Foot/leg	

Activity Two:

In the space below, write about a time when you were sick. Describe what kind of pain or symptoms you had (headache, toothache, chest pain). As you are writing,

think about Nina's story about her migraine headache. Like Nina, try to describe your symptoms as clearly as possible. Also, remember that you are describing something that happened in the past; as you are writing, try to use the past tense of each verb.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their response to the prompt above.

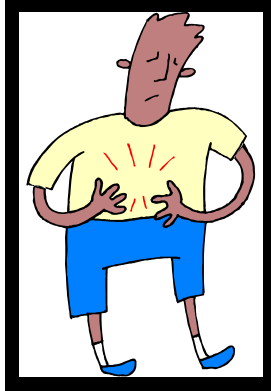
Activity Three:

Unit One

The Doctor's Office

Lesson Two

Describing Pain/Symptoms



Real Practice

Intermediate

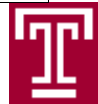
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Lesson Two: Describing Pain/Symptoms

Real Practice!

A. Make a chart listing your problems and symptoms to take with you on your next doctor's visit. Don't forget to list your problems according to severity; write the most severe first, etc.

Problem	Symptoms	When and how often this happens
1.		

*A Thematic Unit for Intermediate Level ESL Teachers
 Intermediate, Unit One: The Doctor's Office
 Lesson Two: Describing Pain/Symptoms*

Checklist for Learning

Vocabulary Log:

In the space below, write down all of the new words you learned during this lesson that you want to remember. Try to separate your list of words into nouns (person, place or thing), adjectives (describing words) and verbs (action words). For extra practice use them in sentences of your own.

New words I learned during this lesson:

Nouns:

Adjectives:

Verbs:

What can you do?

Below are some of the language goals you worked on during this lesson. Check (✓) what you learned from this lesson. Add more ideas if you wish.

I learned to...

- describe your feelings
- understand a voicemail message
- learn new vocabulary
- describe why you call the doctor
- make an appointment
- _____

