

Answering your doctor's questions

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To discuss personal health problems with a GP
- To listen and respond to a GP's questions about personal health



RESOURCES

- Copies of Resources 1, 3 and 4
- Cards made from Resources 2A and 2B (Activity 1 Support)
- Copies of audio script 47 (Activity 2 Support)
- Extra questions to be devised by teacher (Activity 2 ESOL)
- Extra responses to be devised by teacher (Activity 3 Support)
- Audio equipment 46–49

RELATED TOPICS

- Talking to your doctor (Theme 10, Topic 6)
- Telling your doctor what's wrong (Theme 10, Topic 8)

HEALTH SKILLS

To make an accurate diagnosis, a doctor needs to find out as much information from the patient as possible through questioning. This topic helps learners explore the kinds of question they may be asked and to prepare suitable answers.

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

In order to provide a GP with essential information, learners need to be able to:

- plan in advance what they want to say
- explain the reason for coming to see the doctor
- understand routine questions about medical problems and give clear answers.

Functional Skills/Core Curriculum

Activities in this topic will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- listen and respond clearly to routine questions about medical problems
English E3.4 (**E**Lr/E3.5b)
- give simple information about symptoms and time-scales
English E3.2 (**E**Sc/E3.4b, Sc/E3.4f)
- speak clearly to be understood
English E3.2 (**E**Sc/E3.1a).

- Invite learners to discuss their own experiences of going to the doctor.
- Take ideas about the kinds of question the doctor might ask (e.g. 'How do you feel?' 'How long have you been unwell?' 'Are you taking anything?' 'Where is the pain?' 'How bad is the pain?' 'Can you eat?').
- Talk about possible answers, focusing on useful expressions for making time-scales clear (e.g. 'It came on last Monday'; 'I started to feel sick two days ago'; 'I've had the pain for about two weeks'; 'It's the first time I've had this problem').
- Stress the importance of giving full answers to the doctor's questions (e.g. Q: 'How bad is the pain?' A: 'It's very bad. It's always worse when I get up.').
- Establish that as well as responding to the doctor's questions, it can be useful for learners to plan what to say before the appointment.

How easy or difficult can it be to answer the doctor's questions?

How can you make sure you give the doctor all the necessary information?

What can you do to prepare for your visit to the doctor?

ACTIVITY 1 46

Match a patient's answers to a doctor's questions

- Direct learners to the large picture on Resource 1. Without reading the questions, discuss what is happening in the picture.
- Invite learners to comment on the doctor's body language (open, good eye contact) and what it says about the communication between the doctor and the patient.
- Play the audio clip of the doctor's questions from Resource 1 and ask learners to suggest the kind of answers Michael can give.
- Discuss how different questions expect a different kind of answer: question words like 'How ...', 'When ...', 'Where ...' expect specific information; 'Has it ...?' 'Have you ...?' expect 'yes' or 'no'.
- Replay the questions and ask learners to match Michael's responses to the questions.

What types of question require more than 'yes' and 'no' answers?

Support

- Play the questions one at a time, asking learners to identify any that require the answer 'yes' or 'no'.
- Divide learners into small groups. Give out sets of cards with the doctor's questions (Resource 2A) and Michael's responses (Resource 2B).
- Begin by asking groups to match the 'yes'/'no' answers to the appropriate questions. Then proceed to matching answers to the open questions.

ESOL

- Learners may need additional practice in expressing time-scales, as in 'It started on Friday/two days ago'; 'It came on when ...'; 'I've had it for about two days/since Tuesday.'
- Discuss what learners can say if they are having difficulty understanding the doctor's questions (e.g. 'I'm sorry, could you repeat that, please?' 'Sorry, can you explain that again?') or if they are uncomfortable with the questions.

ACTIVITY 2 47

Practise answering a doctor's questions

- Play Michael's responses to the doctor's questions.
- Ask learners to practise saying the responses aloud, paying attention to particular words and syllables that are stressed: 'The pain's so bad it keeps me awake at night.'
- Replay the questions for learners to reply aloud.

Support

- Give out copies of the audio script (track 47).
- Play Michael's responses one at a time. Ask learners to follow the stress on the audio script while listening.
- When they are confident, proceed to the task.

ESOL

- Draw up a range of extra questions and work with learners to devise answers.
- Help learners respond to your questions, concentrating on pace, stress and intonation.
- Allow time for learners to practise some of the questions and answers in pairs.

ACTIVITY 3 48–49

Plan what you will say to the doctor

- Play the next audio clip of a doctor's questions (track 48).
- Ask learners to pick out the questions requiring the answers 'yes' or 'no'.
- Discuss possible answers to each question, introducing new vocabulary and expressions as necessary (e.g. 'the pain comes and goes'; 'sometimes it's a dull ache, other times it's quite severe').
- Make sure learners answer the questions fully, providing all the detail that will help the doctor understand the problem.
- Ask learners to suggest some questions to ask if they don't understand, or want clarification.
- Encourage learners to make notes for each question, recording key words and expressions for each answer.
- In pairs, ask learners to practise their responses to each question, giving all relevant information and remembering to avoid simple yes/no answers.
- Play the whole conversation (track 49) for learners to listen and amend their notes as necessary. Here the doctor is talking to another patient, Philip.

Support

- Play the questions one at a time and more than once.
- Provide possible responses on cards for learners to match to the questions.

ESOL

Ensure learners recognise questions about medical history: 'Have you had this pain before?' 'When did it come on?' (note the underlined verb constructions). Give extra practice in the answers: 'No, I've never had this pain before.' 'It started last week.'

Can you predict likely questions your doctor may ask?

What questions can you ask if you are unsure or don't understand?

TIP

Circulate during the practice session, helping learners to:

- use appropriate words and expressions
- provide full answers
- stress the right words when they speak
- clarify by asking questions.

Action

- Suggest learners plan for a visit to their doctor or another health professional, preparing for the visit by making notes on Resource 4 about the problem and what they need to say.
- Encourage them to think about questions the doctor will ask and the answers they will give. Introduce useful vocabulary as required.
- If learners have a visit to the doctor planned, encourage them to report back on the questions they were asked and how they coped with the questions.
- If a real visit is not possible, arrange for another skilled adult to act as the doctor and act out a consultation, using questions from Resource 4 to help.
- Review what happened with the whole group. Record and practise any further useful expressions.

TIP

Respect learners' privacy and confidentiality about medical matters. Ask learners to share questions only if they feel happy to do so.

Answering your doctor's questions

RESOURCE 1

🎧 46–47

Michael goes to see the doctor. The doctor asks questions.



Michael answers.



Some questions ask you to say only 'yes' or 'no'.

Some questions ask you to say more than just 'yes' or 'no'.

Answer every question by giving all the information you need to give.

How bad is the pain?

Has it got worse?

How long have you felt like this?

Where does it hurt?

Have you had this pain before?

When did it come on?

Answering your doctor's questions

RESOURCE 2B

For about two days.

It's here on my left side.

No, it hasn't got worse.

Yes, I had the same pain about two weeks ago.

The pain's so bad it keeps me awake at night.

The pain started when I got in from work on Tuesday.

Answering your doctor's questions

RESOURCE 3

I've got a bad cough.



My head is aching.



I can't sleep at night.



I've got earache.



I've got a pain in my chest.



I fell over and my ankle hurts.



I keep being sick.



My eye is very sore.



My child is constipated.



I can't stop crying.



Answering your doctor's questions

RESOURCE 4

My problem for the doctor
Problem
Symptoms (e.g. pain, being sick)
When did the symptoms start?
Is the problem getting better or worse?
What makes the problem better or worse? (e.g. eating certain foods)
Have you had this problem before?
How bad is the problem? (e.g. can't work)

ACTIVITY 1 / Resources 1–2

Doctor: How bad is the pain?

Michael: The pain's so bad it keeps me awake at night.

Doctor: Has it got worse?

Michael: No, it hasn't got worse.

Doctor: How long have you felt like this?

Michael: For about two days.

Doctor: Where does it hurt?

Michael: It's here on my left side.

Doctor: Have you had this pain before?

Michael: Yes, I had the same pain about two weeks ago.

Doctor: When did it come on?

Michael: The pain started when I got in from work on Tuesday.

ACTIVITY 3

'Yes'/'no' questions

Has it got worse?

Have you had this pain before?

Does it feel worse when you eat?

Does eating make you vomit?

'Open' questions

And how are you today?

Where is the pain? Where does it hurt?

How bad is the pain? How would you describe it?

How long have you felt like this?

ACTIVITY 1



How bad is the pain?
Has it got worse?
How long have you felt like this?
Where does it hurt?
Have you had this pain before?
When did it come on?

ACTIVITY 2



The pain's so bad it keeps me awake at night.
No, it hasn't got worse.
For about two days.
It's here on my left side.
Yes, I had the same pain about two weeks ago.
The pain started when I got in from work on Tuesday.

ACTIVITY 3



And how are you today?
Where is the pain? Where does it hurt?
How bad is the pain? How would you describe it?
How long have you felt like this?
Has it got worse?
Have you had this pain before?
Does it feel worse when you eat?
Does eating make you vomit?

Answering your doctor's questions

ANSWERS AND AUDIO SCRIPTS



Doctor: Good morning ... Philip, isn't it?

Philip: Yes. Good morning.

Doctor: And how are you today, Philip?

Philip: Well, I'm not well at all. You see, I've got this pain ...

Doctor: And where is the pain? Where does it hurt?

Philip: It's here ... below my belt ...

Doctor: In your abdomen?

Philip: Yes, in my abdomen ... and nothing I do makes it feel any better.

Doctor: Let's have a look. How bad is the pain? How would you describe it?

Philip: Oh, it's bad ... very bad ... especially when I try to sleep.

Doctor: I see. On a scale of 1 to 10 – where 1 is very little pain and 10 is very bad pain – where would you place it?

Philip: Oh, 8 ... at least 8.

Doctor: That is bad. How long have you felt like this?

Philip: Well ... it started last Thursday ... so that's nearly a week. Six days ... I've had the pain for six days.

Doctor: Has it got worse in that time?

Philip: Er ... yes. It's worse now than it was a week ago. It makes me feel sick. I can't eat anything.

Doctor: And have you had this pain before?

Philip: No, I don't think so.

Doctor: Does it feel worse when you eat?

Philip: No. It hurts all the time. But when I eat, I feel sick.

Doctor: Does eating make you vomit?

Philip: No. But that's because I've stopped eating.

Doctor: Just pop up onto the bed here and I'll take a look ...