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**ESL Podcast 971 – Getting in to See a Busy Doctor**

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**GLOSSARY**

**GP** – general practitioner; a medical doctor who provides general care to all types of patients, without specializing in certain medical problems or types of patients

\* Our entire family sees the same GP, because she deals well with people of all ages.

**specialist** – a medical doctor who provides advanced care for certain types of medical problems or certain types of patients

\* Dr. Drake is a heart specialist for children with heart problems.

**opening** – an open appointment; a slot of time that has not yet been assigned to something, so one can schedule an appointment then

\* Do you have any openings on Thursday afternoon?

**waitlisted** – put on a list of people who are waiting for an opportunity to do something, so that if another person cancels, he or she will be called

\* The university offers admission to the top 2,000 applicants, and others are waitlisted.

**cancellation** – a request to not have an appointment that was previously scheduled, usually because it is no longer necessary, one no longer needs it, or one is unable to be there at that time

\* The hair stylist has a full schedule today, but we'll let you know if there are any cancellations.

**to endure** – to suffer from something over a long period of time, but while being brave and not complaining very much

\* I'm not sure how much longer I can endure the sound of our neighbor's son learning to play the violin!

**the best in the business** – a person or business that is very good at what it does; an industry leader; the top professional providing a particular service

\* You'll love your hair after Raul cuts it. He's the best in the business!

**physical therapist** – a person whose job it to help a person recovery from an injury by learning how to move part of one's body in a way that protects and strengthens a muscle while developing great flexibility

\* The physical therapist has taught Shannon a lot of new ways to stretch her shoulder and increase her range of motion.



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**to flare up** – to temporarily become much stronger, brighter, or more painful, and then return to the previous state, especially when this happens multiple times  
\* It's common for headaches to flare up during stressful periods.

**relief** – a reduction in pain or a feeling of relaxation; release from a painful, tense, or stressful situation  
\* Putting ice against the injury provides pain relief for a little while.

**to fit (someone) in** – to rearrange one's appointments to find time to meet with someone when one is very busy and has a full schedule  
\* I have a lot of meetings tomorrow, but I should be able to fit you in at 10:45.

**booked up** – busy, with many other time commitments; unavailable  
\* It's really hard to get a reservation at that restaurant, which is sometimes booked up for months.

**podiatrist** – a doctor who specializes in the human foot and ankle (bones connecting the foot to the leg)  
\* Podiatrists recommend that women avoid wearing high-heeled shoes.

**to fall apart** – to no longer work properly, usually because something is very old, especially with pieces of a machine becoming disconnected  
\* This old tractor is falling apart. Don't you think it's time to buy a new one?

**expiration date** – the date stamped or printed on a product to show when it will no longer be good to eat or use, because it will have spoiled  
\* This milk smells bad, even though the expiration date isn't until next week. Did you forget to put it back in the refrigerator?



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did the GP refer Monique to a specialist?
  - a) Because the GP isn't trained to treat her back problems.
  - b) Because Monique can't pay the GP's regular rates.
  - c) Because the GP doesn't have any openings in her schedule.
2. What does Monique mean when she says that her neck is "flaring up" again?
  - a) She feels a painful, burning sensation in her neck.
  - b) Her neck pain is improving over time.
  - c) Her neck pain is worsening for short periods of time.

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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **opening**

The word "opening," in this podcast, means an open appointment or a slot of time that has not yet been assigned to something, so one can schedule an appointment then: "Please book an appointment for the next available opening." In theaters, "opening night" is the first night when a play or movie can be seen by the public: "They stood in line for hours to get tickets for opening night." A "grand opening" is the first day or week when a new business is open: "The furniture store had free hamburgers and hot dogs for customers during the grand opening." Finally, a "job opening" is a vacant position or an opportunity to work for a particular company: "Please keep my resume on file in case you have any job openings in your human resources department."

#### **to flare up**

In this podcast, the phrase "to flare up" means to temporarily become much stronger, brighter, or more painful, and then return to the previous state, especially when this happens multiple times: "His back pain seems to flare up on cold, humid days." If a piece of clothing "flares out," it becomes wider: "The jacket has interesting sleeves that flare out at the wrists." The phrase "tempers flare" means that people become angry and lose control of their words and/or actions: "Tempers flared when the CEO announced that jobs were being eliminated." Finally, a "flare" is a device that burns to create a bright red light, usually placed behind a car that has broken down, so that other drivers do not hit it: "Please light these flares and put them on the ground about 50 feet behind the car."



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**CULTURE NOTE**

**Ways to Receive Medical Care**

When Americans have “health insurance” (an arrangement or contract with a company that helps to pay for medical expenses), they usually want to see their “primary care physician” (main doctor; the doctor a person normally sees) if they need healthcare. But sometimes that doctor is unavailable, especially if the patient wants to “see the doctor” (have a consultation or appointment) as a “same-day visit” (on the same day when one called to request an appointment).

If the doctor is part of a “clinic” (a group of medical professionals working together in the same office), the patient might see another doctor who works in that clinic. If all the doctors are booked, the patient can choose to speak with a nurse or a “PA” (physician’s assistant) instead. Nurses and PAs have received less training and education than medical doctors, but they can “handle” (deal with; address) many common “ailments” (health problems).

Sometimes people find that they don’t actually need to see the doctor. Instead, their problem might be handled over the phone. Most clinics have a phone number that patients can call to leave a brief message describing the “nature” (type) of their problem. The nurse who is “on call” (assigned to respond to calls during a certain period of time) will call the patient back and provide basic medical advice, as well as a recommendation regarding whether the patient should “seek” (try to get) medical attention immediately.

If immediate medical attention is required, the patient might be directed to an “urgent care clinic” where patients can see a doctor as a same-day visit, but that doctor isn’t their primary care physician. However, in a “life-threatening emergency” (a situation that could cause death), patients should go to the “ER” (emergency room) at the local hospital.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – a; 2 – c



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 971 – Getting In to See a Busy Doctor.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 971. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at [ESLPod.com](http://ESLPod.com). Go there. Download a Learning Guide. Become a member of ESL Podcast and like us on Facebook. Why not? [Facebook.com/eslpod](https://www.facebook.com/eslpod).

This episode is a dialogue between Monique and Jurgen about trying to see a doctor who is very busy. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Monique: Ugh!

Jurgen: What's the matter?

Monique: My GP referred me to a specialist for my back problems, but she doesn't have any openings for eight weeks! I'm waitlisted in case there's a cancellation, but if there isn't one, I'll have to endure this pain for at least another eight weeks.

Jurgen: Can't you just go see another specialist?

Monique: I could, but my GP says that she's the best in the business. In the meantime, I'll try to see a physical therapist about my neck. It's flaring up again.

Jurgen: At least you'll get some relief.

Monique: Maybe. I have to call back tomorrow morning to see if she can fit me in. She's really booked up, too. While I'm waiting, I guess I could try to see the podiatrist about my feet.

Jurgen: You're having feet problems, too?

Monique: Yeah, my whole body is falling apart. I think I'm nearly past my expiration date!



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[end of dialogue]

Monique begins our little dialogue by saying, “Ugh.” She’s expressing disappointment about something, we’re not sure what. Jurgen asks her, “What’s the matter?” meaning what is the problem? Monique says, “My GP referred me to a specialist for my back problems, but she doesn’t have any openings for eight weeks.” Your “GP” is your general practitioner. A “general practitioner” is a medical doctor who provides what we might describe as “general care.” If you’re sick or have a problem, the first person, the first doctor you would probably go to see would be your “general practitioner,” or your “GP.” That’s the doctor who handles all sorts of cases, all sorts of problems.

If your problem is one the doctor – the GP – cannot solve or cannot help you with, he may send you to a specialist. A “specialist” (specialist) is a medical doctor who knows a lot about one particular kind of problem or topic. You could have a specialist in cancer. You could have someone who is a specialist in bones. You could have someone who is a specialist in feet. Doctors have all sorts of specialties that they can focus on or concentrate on, and that’s the problem Monique is having. Her GP referred her to a specialist for her back problems. However, the specialist doesn’t have any openings for eight weeks.

An “opening” is an appointment that is available, a time when you can go in and see a certain person – in this case, a doctor. However, this doctor doesn’t have any available appointments for eight weeks. Monique says, “I’m waitlisted in case there is a cancellation, but if there isn’t one, I’ll have to endure this pain for at least another eight weeks.” “To be waitlisted” (waitlisted) means to have your name put on a list so that if someone decides not to go to their appointment – if someone cancels their appointment – you can take their place.

What will often happen is that doctor will call you, or the doctor’s receptionist or nurse will call you, and tell you, “Hey, we have an available appointment at ten o’clock tomorrow morning because someone canceled” – someone said they could not make it, even though they had an appointment scheduled. That’s what a “cancellation” is – when someone says, “No, I can’t make it to that appointment”; “I won’t be able to go to that appointment.” Monique has been waitlisted. She’s on a “waiting list,” waiting for someone to cancel.

Monique says if there is not a cancellation, she’ll have to endure the pain “for at least another eight weeks.” “To endure” (endure) means to suffer from something for a long period of time, but you don’t complain about it. So, someone who



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## ESL Podcast 971 – Getting in to See a Busy Doctor

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“endures” suffering or “endures” pain has the pain, suffers from the pain, feels the pain, but doesn’t complain about it – is “brave” about it, we might say.

Jurgen says, “Can’t you just go see another specialist?” meaning isn’t it possible for you to see a different doctor, a different specialist? Monique says, “I could, but my GP says that she is the best in the business.” Her doctor is telling her that this particular specialist is “the best in the business.” The word “business” here just means area or field or type of work. To say someone is “the best in the business” means that they are the best at what they do. They may be the best baseball player. They may be the best manager. They may be the best podcaster. Whatever the occupation or whatever the area of work is, this person is the best at doing that.

Monique says, “In the meantime,” while she’s waiting, “I’ll try to see a physical therapist about my neck.” “A physical therapist” (therapist) is a person who helps you recover after you have had an injury. For example, if you hurt your leg – let’s say you break your leg in an accident – after your leg gets better, you may have to go to physical therapy to help you strengthen the muscles again in your leg. The physical therapist will do things to help you recover or get better from this injury. Usually it’s an injury to a muscle or something related to your arms and legs.

Monique says, “It’s flaring up again.” “To flare (flare) up” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to get worse, especially when we’re talking about pain or some sort of illness or sickness that gets better and then it gets worse and then it gets better again. It’s a temporary increase in the pain or in whatever health problem you have. You could talk about your allergies “flaring up.” That would mean your allergies would suddenly be getting worse. You have an allergy when your body reacts negatively to some substance or something that it comes in contact with, either by breathing or by eating or by touching.

Monique doesn’t have an allergy. She has a back problem, and it’s flaring up once more. Jurgen says, “At least you’ll get some relief.” “Relief” (relief) is a reduction in pain or a release from pain – when you get better and you no longer feel the pain. There used to be a commercial on television about an antacid – something that would help your stomach feel better if it wasn’t feeling well. The name of the antacid was Rolaid, and the commercial said, “How do you spell relief?” But then the person on the commercial spelled “Rolaid” (Rolaid).

Well, that’s actually not how you spell relief. We spelled it for you already, but that’s just something I think of when I am spelling the word “relief,” that old commercial. Back to our story: Monique says maybe she’ll get some relief –



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## ESL Podcast 971 – Getting in to See a Busy Doctor

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maybe she'll feel better from the pain that she is feeling by going to see a physical therapist. She says, "I have to call back tomorrow morning to see if she" – the physical therapist – "can fit me in."

The expression "to fit someone in" or "to fit in" someone means to arrange your appointments so that you can see someone who didn't have an appointment before. When a doctor, for example, has a very busy schedule, he has someone that he's going to see every hour. But then one of his patients calls and asks him if he can fit her in – if he can find time to see her even though she doesn't have an appointment. That's what Monique wants to do.

Unfortunately, the physical therapist is "really booked up." "To be booked (booked) up" means to have a lot of commitments, to be very busy, to not have any appointments available. Monique says, "While I'm waiting, I guess I could try to see the podiatrist about my feet." A "podiatrist" (podiatrist) is a doctor whose specialty is feet, a doctor who takes care of your feet if you have some sort of problem with them. Monique has a back problem, but now we learn she also has a foot problem. Jurgen says, "You" [have] "feet problems, too?"

Monique says, "Yeah, my whole body is falling apart." The phrasal verb "to fall apart" means to no longer work properly, usually because it's very old. We talk about a machine falling apart after many years. You might have a machine you use to wash your clothing, for example. But after many years, it starts to have problems. It begins to fall apart – to not work properly. Monique says her body is "falling apart." We normally don't use this phrasal verb when talking about your body, but Monique is making a little joke here, comparing her body to a machine.

She says, "I think I'm nearly past my expiration date." An "expiration (expiration) date" is a time or a date that is put on, usually, a package with food in it, that tells you the date by which you need to eat the food. For example, if you buy milk and it says the expiration date is June 20th, that means that you should drink the milk by June 20th. Actually, you usually can drink it for a few days after that. The idea of an expiration date, then, is a date after which you probably shouldn't eat a certain kind of food or drink a certain kind of drink.

Monique again is making a joke here, comparing her body to food – I guess saying that she's nearly past her expiration date, meaning she's getting old and that's why her body is falling apart.

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]



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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter is a specialist in writing wonderful scripts to help you improve your English. I speak, of course, of our own Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again right here on ESL Podcast.

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