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ESL Podcast 227 – Describing Symptoms to a Doctor

GLOSSARY

stomachache – a pain in the stomach

* Jenny has a stomachache because she ate too much junk food this afternoon.

to come and go – to appear and disappear; to arrive and leave

* Ella is tired because she was coming and going all day yesterday, between her house, her work, the school, and store.

heartburn – a burning pain in the chest, usually caused by something you ate

* Whenever Dad eats pizza, he gets a bad case of heartburn.

bloated – uncomfortably full of food, gas, or water

* I drank too much soda with lunch and now I feel bloated.

nauseous – sick to one's stomach; a feeling that one wants to vomit or throw up

* Standing on the roof of a tall building and looking down makes me feel nauseous.

to press – to gently push; to push down

* The little boy pressed all of the buttons in the elevator so we had to stop on every floor.

headache – a pain in the head

* Jeremiah says that his neighbors play their music too loudly and that's why he always has a headache.

fatigued – very tired

* After working 12 hours at the hospital, the doctor was very fatigued and she needed some rest.

stuffy nose – the feeling that something is in one's nose which makes it difficult to breathe

* Grandpa always has a stuffy nose when he visits their house. Maybe he's allergic to their cats.

cough – the noise caused when air is forced through one's throat, especially when one is sick

* I would have enjoyed the opera, but it was difficult to hear the singers because the man sitting behind me had a bad cough.



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sore throat – a burning pain in one’s throat

* My mother taught me that whenever I have a sore throat, I should drink a lot of orange juice and hot tea with lemon.

earache – a pain in the ear

* If a bad earache isn’t treated, the infection can cause a loss of hearing.

stiff – difficult to move

* My body is so stiff today because I went running yesterday for the first time in six months.

to lose feeling – not to be able to feel anything; to have no feeling in a part of one’s body

* Karen slept on her right arm, and when she woke up, she realized that she had lost feeling in her hand.

symptom – a problem with one’s body that shows that someone isn’t healthy

* The symptoms of the flu include fever, body aches, and tiredness.

in-laws – the parents of one’s husband or wife

* Ever since my parents died, my in-laws have treated me like their own son.

to admit (someone) – to send someone to a clinic or hospital for special care, usually overnight

* When the doctor couldn’t identify the cause of Carly’s symptoms, he admitted her to the hospital for more tests.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Nick visiting the doctor?
 - a) He feels very sick and has an unusual combination of symptoms.
 - b) He thinks he broke his leg because it is stiff and he has trouble walking.
 - c) He wants the doctor to send him to the hospital so he won't need to go home.

 2. Dr. van Eyck believes that:
 - a) Nick isn't really sick, but he is having trouble at home.
 - b) Nick should take medicine and rest in bed for three days.
 - c) Nick's symptoms are very dangerous and he should go to the hospital immediately.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to press

The verb “to press,” in this podcast, means to gently push: “She pressed a bag of ice against her forehead, hoping that it would make her headache go away.” The verb “to press” can also mean to try to persuade or convince someone else. For example, “The salesperson is pressing the young family to buy the most expensive car, even though they don't need it.” Another meaning of “to press” is to make something flat: “She pressed the flowers between the pages of a heavy book.” As a noun, “the press” refers to newspapers and magazines or the people who work for newspapers and magazines. For example, “Americans believe in freedom of the press, which means that the government should not control what is written in newspapers and magazines.”

to lose feeling

In this podcast, the phrase “to lose feeling” means to not be able to feel anything: “After the car accident, he lost all feeling in both of his legs and now he can't walk.” Many idioms use the verb “to lose.” For example, “to lose it” is an informal expression that means to be out of control and unable to stop oneself from laughing or crying: “When she heard that she had won the lottery, she completely lost it and began screaming, laughing, and crying at the same time.” The phrase “to lose oneself” means to become very interested in something so that nothing else is important: “Whenever he plays video games on the computer, he completely loses himself and he doesn't hear his mother calling his name.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Companies that create new medicines must spend a lot of money on research and development. These companies want to know that they will receive money for these medicines once they are ready to be sold to “consumers” (buyers). For this reason, the United States allows these companies to “patent” (legally protect) their medicines.

This patent system guarantees that for a certain period of time no other company is allowed to sell the same medicine. All of the money from sales of the medicine during this time is kept by the original company. This patent system is good for the companies that create medicines because it lets them earn back the money they spent on research. It also gives them an “incentive” or a good reason to continue researching and developing new medicines. However, it makes medicine extremely expensive for consumers in the United States.

For this reason, many Americans cannot afford to buy the medicines that they need. Fortunately, there are some ways to avoid paying high prices. Some people buy only “generic” (not name brand) medicines, which are much cheaper than branded medicines, but contain the same medicine. Other people pay for “prescription drug” (medicine recommended by a doctor) insurance, which pays for a certain percentage of the cost of their medicines.

A popular way to avoid paying high prices for medicine is to buy medicines from other countries. For example, most medicines are much less expensive in Canada than in the United States, so some Americans choose to go on vacation in Canada to buy medicines to bring home or buy them online. Many doctors and politicians are concerned about the safety of buying medicines in other countries where quality may not be as high, but until the price of medicines goes down, many Americans will continue to buy their medicines from other countries.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 227: Describing Symptoms to a Doctor.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast number 227. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com and download a copy of the Learning Guide for this podcast.

The topic for today's podcast is "Describing Symptoms to a Doctor." Let's get started.

[Start of story]

Dr. van Eyck: Good morning, I'm Dr. van Eyck. I understand that you're not feeling well.

Nico: That's right, doctor. I've had a stomachache for three days. The pain comes and goes, but I also have heartburn and I am feeling bloated all the time.

Dr. van Eyck: Well, let's take a look. Have you felt nauseous? Does it hurt when I press here?

Nico: Oh yes, that hurts, and I feel nauseous all the time. But, doctor, that's not all. I've also had bad headaches in the past week and I feel fatigued all the time.

Dr. van Eyck: Have you had a stuffy nose, a cough, a sore throat, or an earache?

Nico: Yes, I've had all of those.

Dr. van Eyck: You have? All of them?

Nico: And, there's more. I've been feeling pains in my leg. Sometimes it feels stiff and sometimes I lose feeling in it. I'm having a lot of trouble walking.

Dr. van Eyck: I have to say that you have an unusual combination of symptoms. Have there been any significant changes in your life in the past few days?



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Nico: Well, my in-laws are visiting from out of town. Do you think you'll need to admit me into the hospital for tests?

Dr. van Eyck: I'm not sure that's necessary. Are things really that bad at home?

Nico: You have no idea!

[End of story]

Our podcast is entitled "Describing Symptoms to a Doctor." Symptoms, "symptoms," are indications or signs that there is something wrong with your body. So, if your leg hurts, that's a symptom of, perhaps, a damaged muscle or some other problem in your leg.

This podcast is about telling the doctor what your symptoms are, and we talk about some common symptoms that you might talk to a doctor about. In our dialogue, the doctor, Dr. van Eyck, comes in and says to the patient - the person who is sick - "I understand that you're not feeling well."

The patient, Nico, says, "That's right, doctor. I've had a stomachache for three days." A stomachache, "stomachache," is two words made one word. Stomach is where the food goes in your body when you eat, and ache means to hurt. So, when you say you have a stomachache, you mean that your stomach hurts.

This poor Nico has "had a stomachache for three days. The pain comes and goes, but I also have heartburn and I am feeling bloated all the time." The expression the pain comes and goes means that sometimes you have pain and then, maybe a few minutes later, you don't have pain. Anything that comes and goes is present and then is not present - you have it and then you don't have it, and then you may have it again.

This patient also has heartburn. Heartburn, "heartburn," (one word) isn't really about your heart; heartburn is a pain that you feel near your heart, above your stomach in your chest, but it is caused by, usually, some problem with your eating - something that you have eaten and you have this pain. So, you can have a stomachache and you can also have heartburn.

Nico also says he's "feeling bloated all of the time." To be bloated, "bloated," means to feel like you're full of water or perhaps food or something else, and your body feels too full, like you've eaten too much.



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Dr. van Eyck then asks Nico if he has “felt nauseous,” “nauseous.” To feel or to be nauseous means that your stomach is not feeling well, and you think that you may want to vomit or throw up. To vomit, “vomit,” is when food that was in your stomach goes back out your mouth. Not a very nice thing to happen, for most people. Feeling nauseous is when you feel like you may very soon throw up.

Dr. van Eyck says, “Does it hurt when I press here,” and obviously, she takes her hand and perhaps puts it on Nico's stomach. To press, “press,” means to push - to use force on something, usually with your hand. There are other meanings of the word press, and if you look in today's Learning Guide, we talk about some additional meanings of this word.

Nico says, “Oh yes, that hurts,” meaning the place where the doctor is pressing her hand is hurting him. He says, he feels “nauseous all the time. But, doctor, that's not all,” he says. He has even more problems. He says, “I've also had bad headaches in the past week and I feel fatigued all the time.” A headache, “headache,” is one word like stomachache, and it means, you can guess, that your head has some pain. I have a headache, for example, when I watch the television news and see all the terrible things going on the world; that gives me a headache. What also gives me a headache is my neighbor and his loud noise. Well, I won't tell you about my problems!

Nico's problem is that he has “bad headaches,” or headaches that are very severe, we might say, “severe” - headaches that hurt a lot. He also feels fatigued, “fatigued.” To feel to be fatigued means to feel very tired.

Dr. van Eyck asks Nico about some other possible symptoms. He says, “Have you had a stuffy nose, a cough, a sore throat, or an earache?” Let's start with the first one of these, a stuffy, “stuffy,” nose. A stuffy nose is when your nose has some liquid in it that makes it difficult for you to breathe using your nose; you have to use your mouth. If you have a stuffy nose, one thing that you do if you blow your nose, “blow.” To blow your nose means to use air to get the liquid out of your nose.

Dr. van Eyck asks if Nico has “a cough,” “cough.” A cough is like this (sound of cough). That's a cough. A sore, “sore,” throat is when your throat hurts. It's like a throat ache, but we don't say throat ache, we say a sore throat. When you swallow, for example, your throat hurts. Your throat is what connects your mouth to your stomach. An earache, “earache,” is, again you can guess, a pain in your ear. So, we have stomachache, we have headache we have earache, you can



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have a backache, a side ache, where the side of your body aches; all of these are ways of describing a part of your body that hurts. Nico says, “Yes, I’ve had all of those,” he has all those symptoms. Dr. van Eyck is a little surprised. She says, “All of them?”

And Nico says, “And, there’s more,” meaning I have even more things wrong with me. “I’ve been feeling pains in my leg. Sometimes” my leg “feels stiff,” “stiff.” When we say your leg feels stiff, we mean it’s difficult to move - it hurts when you try to move it. He also says that he’s losing feeling in his legs. To lose feeling means to not be able to feel anything - to have no feeling in one part of your body. This expression, to lose feeling, has some additional meanings, which we discuss in our Learning Guide.

Dr. van Eyck then says, “I have to say that you have an unusual combination of symptoms.” This expression, I have to say, is one we sometimes use when we are going to be honest with a person but it may, somehow, hurt them or make them feel bad. Dr. van Eyck says have you had any other “significant changes in your life in the past few days?”

Nico responds, “Well, my in-laws are visiting from out of town.” Your in-laws, “in-laws,” are usually the parents of your husband or your wife. So, the mother of your wife would be your mother-in-law and father of your wife would be your father-in-law, and together, we would say they were your in-laws. You can also have a brother-in-law and a sister-in-law; these would be the brothers and sisters of your spouse - your husband or your wife. Of course, in-laws, especially mother-in-laws, are often associated with problems - that people don’t get along with or like their mother-in-law or their father-in-law. Usually it’s the mother-in-law; there are a lot of jokes about this.

So, Nico says his “in-laws are visiting from out of town” - from another city. “Do you think you’ll need to admit me into the hospital for tests?” This is a question he’s asking Dr. van Eyck. To admit, “admit,” someone means to send someone to a hospital. This question is sort of a joke; Nico is hoping to escape his in-laws, if he goes to the hospital, he won’t have to be with them.

Dr. van Eyck says, “I’m not sure that’s necessary. Are things really that bad at home” - is your situation very bad? And Nico says, “You have no idea,” meaning yes, you can’t even imagine. Poor Nico!

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



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Dr. van Eyck: Have you had a stuffy nose, a cough, a sore throat, or an earache?

Nico: Yes, I've had all of those.

Dr. van Eyck: You have? All of them?

Nico: And, there's more. I've been feeling pains in my leg. Sometimes it feels stiff and sometimes I lose feeling in it. I'm having a lot of trouble walking.

Dr. van Eyck: I have to say that you have an unusual combination of symptoms. Have there been any significant changes in your life in the past few days?

Nico: Well, my in-laws are visiting from out of town. Do you think you'll need to admit me into the hospital for tests?

Dr. van Eyck: I'm not sure that's necessary. Are things really that bad at home?

Nico: You have no idea!

[End of story]

The script for today's podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

If you have a question or comment about this episode, you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.



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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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