

LESSON 7

Some Troubling Symptoms



Conversation

Patient: Good afternoon.

Doctor: Good afternoon. Have a seat. So, what have you come in for today?

Patient: Thank you. I'm feeling ill, I've got quite a bad cough, but I don't seem to have a fever.

Doctor: I see. How long have you had these symptoms?

Patient: Oh, I've had the cough for two weeks, but feeling ill just these past few days.

Doctor: Are you having any other problems?

Patient: Well, I've got a headache. I've also had a little bit of diarrhea.

Doctor: Do you produce any phlegm when coughing?

Patient: Sometimes, but it's usually pretty dry.

Doctor: Do you smoke?

Patient: Yes, a few cigarettes a day. Certainly, no more than a half a pack a day.

Doctor: How about allergies? Do you have any allergies?

Patient: Not that I'm aware of.

Doctor: Does your head feel stuffy?

Patient: Yes, for the past few days.

Doctor: OK. Now let's have a look. Could you please open your mouth and say 'ah'?

Key Vocabulary

symptoms

to feel ill

cough

fever

to have a cough

headache

diarrhea

phlegm

to cough

allergy

stuffy

to feel stuffy

Dialogue Quiz

Choose the correct answer to these questions based on the dialogue. Each question has only one correct answer.

Q: Which symptom is not mentioned?

- a. Bad cough
- b. Stomachache
- c. Diarrhea

Q: How long has the patient had the symptoms?

- a. He's had all of the symptoms for two months.
- b. He's had the cough for two weeks, and feeling ill for a few days.
- c. The symptoms just began yesterday.

Q: What other problems does the patient mention?

- a. Headache and vomiting
- b. Joint pain
- c. Headache and diarrhea

Q: Does the patient produce phlegm when coughing?

- a. Yes, always
- b. No
- c. Sometimes

Q: Does the patient have any allergies?

- a. Yes, he's allergic to food.
- b. No, none that he knows of.
- c. He's not sure.

Reading & Discussion

Why do we get coughs and colds in winter?

The most common ailments **contracted** during winter are coughs and colds. While many people manage to avoid falling sick, especially those who are fit and have a strong **immune system**, for most of us a week or two with a **runny nose** and cough is an **annual** event.

There are over 100 different **viruses** that can cause the common cold, and they are **mutating** all the time, which is why finding a cure is **tantamount** to impossible. The cold infects the upper airways, and can be caught by droplet spread, when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The constant

cough that can accompany the cold makes this a very easy disease to contract in the winter months, and most people will catch a cold two to four times a year, especially during the winter months.

A winter cough is usually a symptom of the cold. However, during the cold months, bad weather can worsen some **respiratory** problems. People with lung or bronchial complaints often have more difficulty in breathing during cold spells, and wet weather usually **aggravates** coughs.

Cold weather drives us indoors during winter, into close **proximity** with other people. Damp, crowded conditions, such as buses, shops and pubs, can help any **airborne** infection to spread rapidly, especially coughs and colds.

Vocabulary

- **immune system** - The body system in humans and other animals that protects the organism by distinguishing foreign tissue and neutralizing potentially pathogenic organisms or substances. The immune system includes organs such as the skin and mucous membranes, which provide an external barrier to infection, cells involved in the immune response, such as lymphocytes, and cell products such as lymphokines.
- **contracted** – expected to occur
- **runny nose** – (rhinorrhea) persistent watery mucus discharge from the nose (as in the common cold)
- **annual** - Recurring, done, or performed every year; yearly
- **viruses** - Any of various simple submicroscopic parasites of plants, animals, and bacteria that often cause disease and that consist essentially of a core of RNA or DNA surrounded by a protein coat. Unable to replicate without a host cell, viruses are typically not considered living organisms.
- **mutate** - To undergo or cause to undergo alteration or change, as in nature, form, or quality
- **tantamount** - Equivalent in effect or value
- **respiratory** - of, relating to, or affecting respiration or the organs used in respiration
- **aggravate** - to make (a disease, situation, problem, etc.) worse or more severe
- **proximity** - nearness in space or time
- **airborne** - Carried by or through the air

Reference:

<http://esl.about.com>

<http://www.irishhealth.com/>

