

## English for medical purposes

### Taking a history from a patient

#### Exercise 1: questions relating to pain

Below is a list of types of the main questions (1-11) relating to pain. Match each one with one or more questions (A-M) in the right-hand column. One has been done for you as an example.

1. <i>Time of onset</i>	A. Can you tell me what the pain is like?
2. Duration	B. Have you had it before?
3. Site	C. Can you show me where you get the pain?
4. Nature of onset	D. <i>When did it start?</i>
5. Radiation	E. Does anything relieve it?
6. Nature of the pain	F. Did it come on slowly or suddenly?
7. Aggravating factors	G. Does it spread anywhere else?
8. Alleviating features	H. Are you aware of anything that brings the pain on?
9. Previous episodes	I. How long have you had the pain?
10. Triggering factors	J. Does anything make it better?
	K. Where do you get the pain?
	L. Does anything special bring it on?
	M. Does anything make it worse?

## Exercise 2

Insert the following questions in the appropriate spaces in the dialogue below:

### Question list

- A. Where did it start?
- B. Does it go anywhere else?
- C. When did it come on?
- D. And do you still have it?
- E. Can you show me where it is?
- F. Can you describe the pain for me?

- G. How severe is it at the moment?
- H. Is it constant?
- I. And have you had the pain before?
- J. How severe was the pain?
- K. Can you tell me what the problem is?

### History

DOC: Good morning, Mr Fitt  
PAT: Good morning doctor.  
DOC: How can we help you?  
PAT: I've not been feeling very well.  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Well, I've got this terrible pain.  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Yesterday evening.  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Yes, but it's not as bad as it was.  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Yes just here [at the top of my tummy].  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Yes. It feels as if it's going straight through to my back.  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Well. It feels as if it's boring right through me.  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Yes  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 8 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: It's eased off a bit, but it's still bad.

DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Just after dinner.  
DOC: What did you have to eat?  
PAT: The usual, steak and chips.  
DOC: And to drink?  
PAT: A couple of beers.  
DOC: Pints?  
PAT: Yes.  
DOC: Do you have a couple of pints every evening?  
PAT: Yes, more or less.  
DOC: And do you ever have more than a couple?  
PAT: Oh, yeah, especially at week-ends  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 10 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: Yes. But not as bad as this.  
DOC: \_\_\_\_\_ 11 \_\_\_\_\_  
PAT: I don't know, it was really bad  
DOC: Did it make you double up?  
PAT: Yes.  
DOC: Does anything make the pain better?  
PAT: No, not really. Well, maybe if I don't eat.

### Exercise 3: dialogue practice

Pair work practice. Take turns at practising the doctor in the dialogue bellow. When you have done this once each, role-play the dialogue without looking at the text.

#### Student A

PAT: Good morning doctor.  
PAT: I've not been feeling very well.  
PAT: Well, I've got this terrible pain.  
PAT: Yesterday evening.  
PAT: Yes, but it's not as bad as it was.  
PAT: Yes just here [at the top of my tummy].  
PAT: Yes. It feels as if it's going straight through to my back.  
PAT: Well. It feels as if it's boring right through me.  
PAT: Yes  
PAT: It's eased off a bit, but it's still bad.  
PAT: Just after dinner.  
PAT: The usual, steak and chips.  
PAT: A couple of beers.  
PAT: Yes.  
PAT: Yes, more or less.  
PAT: Oh, yeah, especially at week-ends  
PAT: Yes. But not as bad as this.  
PAT: I don't know, it was really bad.  
PAT: Yes.  
PAT: No, not really. Well, maybe if I don't eat.

#### Student B

DOC: Good morning, Mr Fitt  
DOC: How can we help you?  
DOC: Can you tell me what the problem is?  
DOC: Where did it start?  
DOC: And you still have it?  
DOC: Can you show me where it is?  
DOC: Does it go anywhere else?  
DOC: Can you describe the pain for me?  
DOC: Is it constant?  
DOC: How severe is it at the moment?  
DOC: When did it come on?  
DOC: What did you have to eat?  
DOC: And to drink?  
DOC: Pints?  
DOC: Do you have a couple of pints every evening?  
DOC: And do you ever have more than a couple?  
DOC: And have you had the pain before?  
DOC: How severe was the pain?  
DOC: Did it make you double up?  
DOC: Does anything make the pain better?

## Exercise 4: a patient-centred approach

### History

Here is the beginning of the dialogue:

DOC: Good morning, Mr Fitt

PAT: Good morning doctor.

DOC: How can I help you?

PAT: I've not been feeling very well.

In the history below, you have three choices to make about what is the most patient-centred approach to taking the history. Choose the best question in each case. Why would you not use the other alternatives?

#### Column A

1. DOC: A Can you tell me a bit more about how you feel?

#### Column B

What's the matter?

#### Column C

Yes?

**PAT: Well, I've got this terrible pain in my tummy ....., it came on just like that yesterday evening after I finished eating.**

2. DOC: You got this terrible pain in the tummy after you finished eating? In the evening? And is it still there?

So it started yesterday evening. And you still have the pain?

And it's gone now?

**PAT: Yes, but it's not as bad as it was.**

3. DOC: Show me where it is.

OK. Can you show me where it is?

Point to it.

**PAT: Yes just here. [*Points to tummy*].**

4. DOC: Does it radiate anywhere else?

Radiate anywhere else?

Just at the top of your tummy. Does it go anywhere else?

**PAT: Yes. It feels as if it's going straight through to my back.**

5. DOC: Can you describe the pain for me?

What does the pain look like?

Describe the pain.

**PAT: Well. It feels as if it's boring right through me. It's there all the time and very seldom leaves you.**

6. DOC: So it's very severe.

It's very severe, isn't it?

Right. When you say it's going right through you, is it very severe?

**PAT: Yes. It made me double up last night.**

7. DOC: And does anything make it better?

And does anything ameliorate the pain?

Anything make it better?

**PAT: No. Not really. Well, mmm maybe if I don't eat a big meal.**

8. DOC: This is the first time you have ever had it?

And is this the first time you have had it?

You've never had an episode before.

**PAT: No. I've had it several times before but not quite as bad as this. I just thought it was indigestion and took something, but they didn't do anything.**

9. DOC: Apart from the tablets, did you take anything else?

Taken anything else?

What else did you take? Anything?

**PAT: No.**

10. DOC: Nothing. Can you just tell me what you had to eat yesterday evening?

Tell me what you ate then.

What did you eat?

**PAT: The usual, steak and chips.**

11. DOC: And did you have any alcohol?

And to drink?

And what alcohol did you have to drink?

**PAT: A couple of beers.**

11. DOC: You drank  
several pints.

Was this pint-size?

Pints?

**PAT: Yes.**

**DOC: Do you have a couple of pints every evening?**

**PAT: Yes, more or less.**

**DOC: And do you ever have more than a couple?**

**PAT: Oh, yeah, especially at week-ends**

## Exercise 5: Colloquial language – phrasal verbs with come

Match the meaning in the boxes (i-xi) with the text underlined in the sentences (A -L). One has been done for you as an example.

i) caught

ii) regain consciousness

iii) recovered from

iv) making progress

v) start

vi) breaking into pieces

vii) had a sudden attack of

- A. When you come to, you will be in the recovery room.  
 B. When you come round, you will be in the recovery room.  
 C. He came down with flu the week before last.  
 D. Everything he eats just keeps coming up.  
 E. When I took the medicine, I came out in little red spots.  
 F. The leg looks as if it's coming along nicely.  
 G. I came over all dizzy when I was walking along the street.  
 H. When did the pain first come on?  
 I. When did you come in?  
 J. He has come through the operation rather well.  
 K. She was very shy at first, but she has come out of herself a lot recently.  
 L. I feel as if my whole life is coming apart.

xi) become more confident

x) were you hospitalised

viii) being vomited

ix) became covered with

## Key: Exercise 1

- |      |        |        |      |         |
|------|--------|--------|------|---------|
| 1. D | 2. I   | 3. K C | 4. F | 5. G    |
| 6. A | 7. C M | 8. E J | 9. B | 10. H L |

## Exercise 2: Full dialogue and Key

- |       |        |      |      |       |
|-------|--------|------|------|-------|
| 1. K  | 2. A C | 3. D | 4. E | 5. B  |
| 6. F  | 7. H   | 8. D | 9. C | 10. I |
| 11. J |        |      |      |       |

Now read the dialogue and see how the questions fit in.

### History

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| DOC: Good morning, Mr Fitt                                       | DOC: When did it come on?                         |
| PAT: Good morning doctor.  | PAT: Just after dinner.                           |
| DOC: How can we help you?  | DOC: What did you have to eat?                    |
| PAT: I've not been feeling very well.                            | PAT: The usual, steak and chips.                  |
| DOC: Can you tell me what the problem is?                        | DOC: And to drink?                                |
| PAT: Well, I've got this terrible pain.                          | PAT: A couple of beers.                           |
| DOC: Where did it start?   | DOC: Pints?                                       |
| PAT: Yesterday evening.  | PAT: Yes.   |
| DOC: And you still have it?                                      | DOC: Do you have a couple of pints every evening? |
| PAT: Yes, but it's not as bad as it was.                         | PAT: Yes, more or less.                           |
| DOC: Can you show me where it is?                                | DOC: And do you ever have more than a couple?     |
| PAT: Yes just here [at the top of my tummy].                     | PAT: Oh, yeah, especially at week-ends            |
| DOC: Does it go anywhere else?                                   | DOC: And have you had the pain before?            |
| PAT: Yes. It feels as if it's going straight through to my back. | PAT: Yes. But not as bad as this.                 |
| DOC: Can you describe the pain for me?                           | DOC: How severe was the pain?                     |
| PAT: Well. It feels as if it's boring right through me.          | PAT: I don't know, it was really bad.             |
| DOC: Is it constant?   | DOC: Did it make you double up?                   |
| PAT: Yes   | PAT: Yes.   |
| DOC: How severe is it at the moment?                             | DOC: Does anything make the pain better?          |
| PAT: It's eased off a bit, but it's still bad.                   | PAT: No, not really. Well, maybe if I don't eat.  |



## Exercise 4

1. A
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. A
6. C

7. A [POSSIBLY C]
8. B [Possibly A]
9. A [Possibly B]
10. A
11. B
12. C

## Exercise 5

- A. ii
- B. ii
- C. i
- D. viii
- E. ix
- F. iv
- G. vii
- H. v
- I. x
- J. iii
- M.

- K. xi
- L. vi