

Lesson Plan: Health and illness vocabulary

Level	Beginner / Intermediate (A2–B1)
Time	50–60 minutes
Skills	Vocabulary, speaking, listening
Focus	Symptoms and illnesses; making a doctor's appointment; advice with should/ought to

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Name at least 15 common symptoms and illnesses in English
- Describe symptoms clearly using have and feel
- Use language for making a doctor's appointment and describing a problem
- Give and respond to health advice using should, shouldn't, and ought to

TARGET LANGUAGE & EXAMPLES

Common symptoms

- headache, stomachache, sore throat, runny nose, cough, fever/high temperature
- nausea, dizziness, fatigue, rash, swelling, loss of appetite, shortness of breath

Common illnesses

- cold, flu/influenza, food poisoning, migraine, allergy, infection, sprain, fracture

At the doctor's

- I'd like to make an appointment. / I don't feel well.
- I've had a cough for three days. / My throat is really sore.
- Where does it hurt? / How long have you had this?
- I'll prescribe some antibiotics. / You need to rest and drink plenty of fluids.

Giving health advice

- You should drink plenty of fluids. / You shouldn't go to work.
- You ought to see a doctor. / Have you tried taking painkillers?
- Make sure you get enough rest. / Try to avoid cold drinks.

Meaning & Nuance

Symptom	Description	Typical cause
fever	high body temperature (above 38°C/100.4°F)	infection, flu
nausea	feeling like you might vomit	food poisoning, motion sickness, anxiety
fatigue	extreme tiredness, beyond just sleepy	illness, overwork, anaemia
rash	red, itchy patches on skin	allergy, heat, viral illness
sore throat	painful or scratchy when swallowing	cold, flu, tonsillitis

dizziness	feeling unsteady, like the room is spinning	low blood pressure, inner ear problems
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LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up: How are you? (5 min)

Task: Students describe how they're feeling — or invent a convincing illness.

- Elicit: What's wrong? / What are your symptoms?

→ Sets up the vocabulary naturally before formal presentation.

2. Vocabulary presentation (10 min)

Task: Symptoms and illnesses in categories. Grammar: I have a + noun / I feel + adjective.

- Duration: 'I've had it for 2 days' / 'since Monday'.
- Pronunciation: nausea, dizziness, fatigue, prescription.

3. Doctor roleplay (20 min)

Task: Medical consultation: patient describes symptoms, doctor asks questions and gives advice.

- Patient cards: a list of symptoms. Doctor cards: follow-up question prompts.
- 'When did it start?' / 'Have you taken anything for it?' / 'Is it getting worse?'
- Rotate roles after each consultation.

4. Health advice discussion (10 min)

Task: Students give advice for 5 different health situations.

- 'My friend hasn't slept properly for a week.' → 'She should try going to bed earlier...'
- Use should, shouldn't, ought to, and 'why not try...?'

TEACHER NOTES

- Sensitive area for some students — be aware of health anxiety or phobias.
- This topic pairs extremely well with a future lesson on modal verbs for advice.
- The distinction between a cold and flu is culturally important in English-speaking countries.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one or more:

1. Write a dialogue between a doctor and patient describing an illness and its treatment.
2. Write 6 health tips for a classmate using should, shouldn't, and ought to.
3. Research a common illness and write a paragraph describing its symptoms and treatment.