

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Identifying Symptoms of Illness

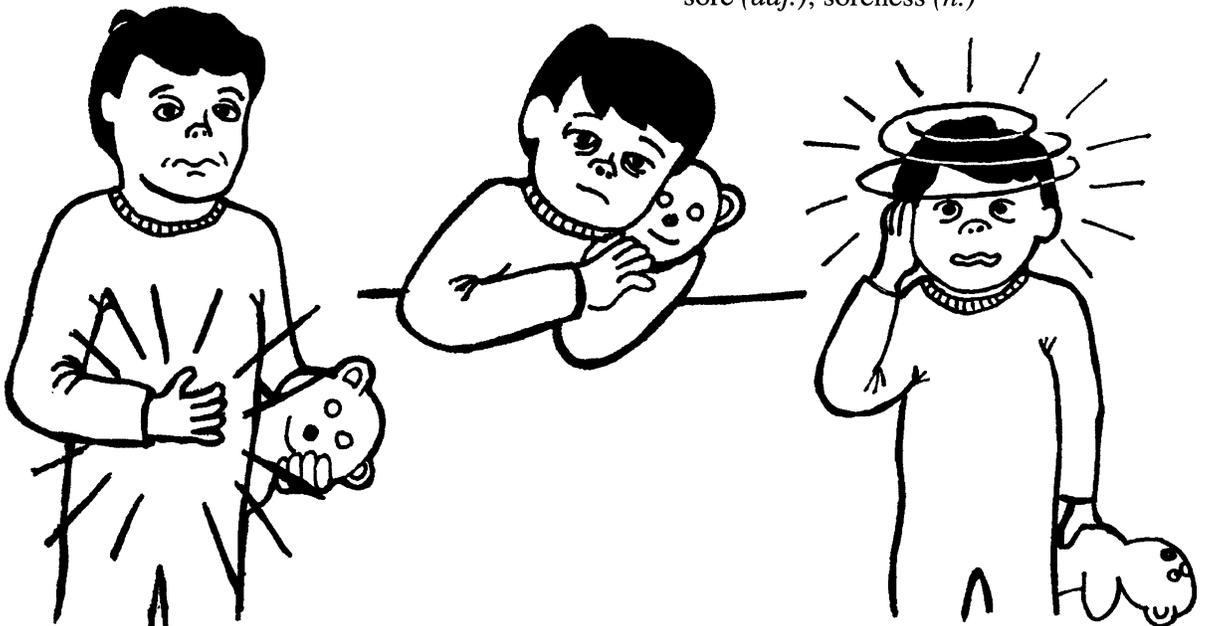
1 How Do You Feel?

Directions: Review the symptoms and pictures below. Act out the symptoms or describe them using simple English terms.

When we are sick we experience many symptoms. Symptoms are clues that help us and our doctors understand why we are sick. When the doctor knows what our symptoms are and what causes them, she or he can recommend ways to get better.

dizzy (*adj.*); dizziness (*n.*)
nausea (*n.*); nauseated (*adj.*)
headache(s) (*n.*)
stomachache(s) (*n.*)
diarrhea (*n.*)
itch (*n.*)
rash(es) (*n.*)
irritable (*adj.*); irritability (*n.*)
pain(s) (*n.*)

cough (*v.*)
sneeze (*v.*)
fatigue (*n.*)
tired (*adj.*)
sore throat(s) (*n.*)
cramp(s) (*n.*)
fever(s) (*n.*)
vomit (*v.*)
ache (*v.*); ache(s) (*n.*)
sore (*adj.*); soreness (*n.*)



2

Complete the Sentences

Directions: Complete the following sentences using the symptoms listed above.

1. I have a cold. I am _____

2. My head is spinning. I feel _____

3. I ate something bad. Now I feel _____

4. My muscles hurt. They are _____

5. My temperature is 101° F. I have a _____

6. Nothing is going right. I am grumpy and _____

7. These red marks on my skin must be a _____

The Mysterious Illness

Directions: Read or act out the following passage.

Mr. Lopez is bringing his three-year-old daughter, Lisa, to the doctor. Lisa is sick. Mr. Lopez wants to know why she is not feeling well. He took her to one doctor two weeks ago and that doctor did not think Lisa was sick. Therefore, Mr. Lopez is visiting a new doctor. A friend told him this doctor was a very good doctor. Mr. Lopez and Lisa are waiting in the examination room when the doctor enters.

Doctor: Hello. How are you today?

Mr. Lopez: I am fine. Thanks.

Doctor: How is Lisa feeling?

Mr. Lopez: I think she is sick.

Doctor: What are her symptoms?

Mr. Lopez: Lisa is always irritable and demanding. She complains of stomachaches.

Doctor: Hmm. I see.

Mr. Lopez: I brought her to a doctor for a checkup two weeks ago. That doctor told me Lisa probably had a cold. I think something else is wrong with my child.

Doctor: I agree with you, Mr. Lopez. If Lisa has had these symptoms more than two weeks, something must be wrong.

Mr. Lopez: Well, I think Lisa may have lead poisoning. We know other people in our neighborhood whose children had these symptoms. Their children had lead poisoning. Besides, the apartment we rent is in an old house which, I think, has lead paint. The paint is peeling on the window frames, doors, and some walls. I have just learned from friends that lead paint, especially peeling lead paint, can be dangerous to children.

Doctor: You may be right about the lead poisoning. Lead poisoned children sometimes show the symptoms you have described. However, Lisa's symptoms are common. Her symptoms might mean a number of things.

Mr. Lopez: What about the paint in our apartment?

Doctor: You are correct. Old homes may have lead paint. Yet, children usually become poisoned by lead dust rather than lead paint. The dust gets on their toys and fingers and children put these things in their mouths. If the paint in your apartment is peeling, I think you may have much lead dust. To make sure that Lisa does not have lead in her blood, I need to do a blood test. It will only take a few minutes for the people in our laboratory to take a blood sample from Lisa's arm. We should have the results in a week.

4

Vocabulary

Directions: Review the vocabulary words below and define each using simple English terms.

| | |
|--|---|
| sick (<i>adj.</i>) | examination room(s) (<i>n.</i>) |
| examine (<i>v.</i>) | doctor(s) (<i>n.</i>) |
| symptom(s) (<i>n.</i>) | complain (<i>v.</i>) |
| irritable (<i>adj.</i>) | check (<i>v.</i>); checkup(s) (<i>n.</i>) |
| demanding (<i>adj.</i>) | lead (<i>n.</i>) |
| poison (<i>v.</i>) | blood (<i>n.</i>) |
| test (<i>v.</i>); test (<i>n.</i>) | mysterious (<i>adj.</i>) |
| illness (<i>n.</i>) | diagnosis(es) (<i>n.</i>) |

5

Review and Discuss

Directions: Review “The Mysterious Illness” and answer the following questions.

1. What are Lisa’s symptoms? _____

2. How long has Lisa had these symptoms? _____

3. Why is it difficult for the doctor to determine what is wrong with Lisa?

4. What does Mr. Lopez think caused Lisa’s symptoms? Why does he think that? _____

5. How can the doctor be sure that Lisa has lead in her blood? _____

6

Topics for Discussion

Directions: Talk about your experiences of being sick and going to the doctor. Answer the following questions.

1. When was the last time you were sick? _____

2. What were your symptoms? _____

3. Do you like going to the doctor? Why or why not? _____

4. Do you have a regular doctor that you see all the time? Where is this doctor? Is it difficult to get to your doctor? _____

5. Do you feel comfortable talking to your doctor or doctors in general? Why or why not? _____

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What Do the Results Mean?

Directions: Read or act out the following passage.

It is one week later and the results of Lisa's blood test are ready. Mr. Lopez and Lisa wait in the examination room for the doctor. The scene opens as the doctor enters the room.

Doctor: Hello, Mr. Lopez. Hello, Lisa.

Mr. Lopez: Hello, Doctor.

[*The doctor sits down across from Mr. Lopez and Lisa.*]

Doctor: Well, Mr. Lopez, you were right. The blood test shows that Lisa does have lead in her blood. She has a high blood lead level.

Mr. Lopez: I don't understand. What does that mean?

Doctor: I'm afraid that Lisa has a serious case of lead poisoning. A blood test shows the amount of lead in the blood. The lead level can be low, moderate, or high.

Mr. Lopez: Is there a cure for lead poisoning?

Doctor: Unfortunately, there is no cure for lead poisoning. In Lisa's case I can give her drugs that will decrease her blood lead level and reduce her symptoms. Yet, she may still develop problems later in life that are related to lead poisoning. Children with a high level of lead in their blood can develop behavioral, emotional, and learning problems. It is too early to predict how the lead poisoning will affect Lisa.

Mr. Lopez: I feel terrible. I wish I had learned sooner that lead poisoning was a problem in my neighborhood and could be a problem for my children. Is there anything I can do?

Doctor: First, I believe you should contact the local health department. Health department officials will identify lead hazards in your apartment and work with your landlord to cover or reduce the lead.

Mr. Lopez: If the health department officials inspect the apartment and ask my landlord to make repairs, he might get upset and evict my family or he might raise our rent.

Doctor: I hear your concerns, Mr. Lopez, but you must consider Lisa's health.

Mr. Lopez: You know I want what is best for my children.

Doctor: Well, there are also a number of simple things you can do once the landlord covers the lead in your apartment. For example, you may need to carefully clean windowsills and floors. You should also make sure that Lisa eats well. She should eat foods high in iron, calcium, and vitamin C. Foods like spinach, milk, and oranges are good for her and they help reduce the amount of lead that gets in her blood. Try to keep Lisa out of the dirt around the house, because the soil also may contain lead. If possible, filter the tap water you use for drinking and cooking or let the water run for a minute before using it.

Mr. Lopez: What about our other children? Do you think they have lead in their blood?

Doctor: You should bring them in for a test, especially if they are younger than six years old. I will also need to see Lisa in a few months so that I can test her again.

Mr. Lopez: I can't believe this is happening to me. I'd better let other people in my house and in my neighborhood know that their children can get lead poisoning.

8 Vocabulary

Directions: Review the vocabulary words below and define each using simple English terms.

contact (v.)
landlord(s) (n.)

remove (v.)
learn (v.)

9 Review and Discuss

Directions: Review “What Do the Results Mean?” and answer the following questions.

1. What are the results of Lisa’s test? _____

2. What do the results mean? _____

3. What will happen to Lisa? _____

4. What does the doctor recommend Mr. Lopez do? _____

5. Do you know any children with lead poisoning? Describe what happened to them and what actions their parents took. _____

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Act Out the Scene

Directions: Unlike the doctor described in “The Mysterious Illness,” some doctors will not ask you about lead in your home. Therefore, you need to be prepared to talk with doctors and nurses about health concerns such as symptoms of lead poisoning. Using the information below, think about what you would say and act out a scene between doctor and patient.

Doctor: You are listening to a patient describe how he or she feels. What kinds of questions would you ask the patient to get him or her to describe in detail how he or she is feeling?

Patient: You are not feeling well. Describe your symptoms to the doctor to let him or her know how you feel. You may even want to predict your illness.

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Writing Assignment

Directions: Using the questions below as a guide, write about a time when you were sick. Carefully describe your symptoms, your trip to the doctor (if you went), and what you did to get better.

Describe a time when you were sick. What happened? What was it like? What were your symptoms? Did you go to the doctor? What did you tell the doctor? What did you do to get better?