

HEALTH AND ILLNESS

Asking about health

Health is the state of the body. When doctors want to know about a patient's usual health, they ask questions such as:

What is your general health like?

How's your health generally?

If you are in good health, you are well and have no illness (disease). If you are healthy you are normally well and can resist illness. If you are fit, you are well and strong.

Not ill:

Healthy

Fit

Fit and well

Well

Very well

In good health

Ill:

Unhealthy

Unfit

Unwell

Not well

Not very well

Poorly

In poor health

Sickness

Sickness has a similar meaning to illness. It is also used in the names of a few specific diseases, for example sleeping sickness and travel sickness. Patients also talk about sickness when they mean nausea and vomiting.

Patient says:

I was sick this morning

Possible meaning:

I was ill this morning

I felt unwell this morning

I vomited this morning

Patient says:

I feel sick

Possible meaning:

I feel ill

I feel unwell

I am nauseous

I feel the need to vomit

The combination of sickness and diarrhea means vomiting and diarrhea.

Recovery

When patients return to normal health after illness, they have recovered, we can also say:

The patient made a good/full/complete recovery.

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If a patient's health is in the process of returning to normal, the patient is improving. The opposite is deteriorating. We can also say that the patient's condition improved or deteriorated.

In speech, we often use the verb **get** to talk about change:

Get over (an illness) - to recover

Get better- to improve

Get worse- to deteriorate

If a patient is better, but then gets worse again, the patient has relapsed. Another word for improvement, especially in recurring conditions such as cancer, is remission.

Complete the conversation

Doctor: How are you feeling today?

Patient: Not very _____.

Doctor: How long have you been feeling _____?

Patient: About a week.

Doctor: What is your _____ like normally?

Patient: Very good. I'm usually quite _____ and _____.

Doctor: What is the problem now?

Patient: It's my stomach.

Doctor: Do you feel _____?

Patient: Yes.

Doctor: Have you actually been _____?

Patient: No.

Doctor: Have you had any serious _____ in the past?

Patient: No, none at all.

Choose the correct word to complete each sentence

Her condition (deteriorated/improved) and she died.

He (relapsed/recovered) and was allowed to go home from hospital.

The cause of sleeping (illness/sickness) was discovered in 1901.

The patient made a full (remission/recovery).

I have been in (poor/good) health for months and feel very fit.

It was a month before I (got over/got better) the illness.

He seems to be rather (unhealthy/unwell)- his diet is bad and he never exercises.

What advice do you give people for keeping fit and well?