

Describing Problems

The problems which a patient reports to the doctor are called **symptoms**, for example pain or nausea. **Signs** are what the doctor finds, also known as **findings**, on examining the patient, for example high blood pressure or a rapid pulse. Symptoms are also known as **complaints**. To report a patient’s symptoms or complaints, doctors say:

Mr Farnsworth was admitted **complaining of** chest pain

In case notes, the abbreviation **c/o** is used:

c/o chest pain

Presentation

Patients say they **went to (see) the doctor**; doctors say the patient **presented**. The symptom which causes a patient to visit a doctor – or to **present** – is called the **presenting symptom**, **presenting complaint** or **presentation**.

His	presenting symptom presenting complaint	was chest pain.
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He **presented to** his GP **with** chest pain.

The usual presentation is chest pain.

Talking about symptoms

Symptom	Meaning	Patients say
tiredness lethargy fatigue lassitude	loss of energy	I feel tired all the time. I feel completely worn out . Lately I’ve been feeling completely exhausted at the end of the day.
malaise	general feeling of being unwell	I feel unwell. I don’t feel well. I’ve been feeling off-colour for two days. I haven’t been feeling myself for a week. I’ve been out of sorts all day.
anorexia	loss of appetite	My appetite is very poor .

		I've been off my food for days.
weight gain	increase in weight	I've put on eight kilos in the last year. I've gained five kilos.
weight loss	decrease in weight	I'm not eating any less than usual but I've lost a lot of weight recently.
constipation	hard, infrequent faeces	My motions are very hard. I've been quite constipated lately. I'm not very regular .

Note: The verb **feel** is also used with other adjectives, such as **hot, cold, nervous, anxious, dizzy/ weak** – *She said she felt dizzy.*

Complete the table with words from the above text.

Noun	Adjective
exhaustion	
fatigue	
lethargy	
tiredness	

Make word combinations using a word from each box.

complain	with
off-	of
out of	out
present	on
put	colour
worn	sorts

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb *present*.

1. A 67-year-old man _____ with a 9-month history of increasing shortness of breath.
2. The most common _____ is loss of consciousness.
3. Cranial arteritis may _____ as fever without any obvious causes.
4. The patient usually _____ with a severe sore throat.
5. The _____ symptoms in this patient could perhaps be due to renal failure.
6. Other conditions with a similar _____ include acute cholecystitis.
7. Reduced growth is an important _____ complaint of coeliac disease.
8. Two months following _____, the patient was able to walk.

Read the patient's description of her symptoms then complete the case report.

I was well until a few months ago. In the beginning, I just felt off-colour and a bit tired. But lately I've been feeling completely worn out at the end of the day. I'm not eating any more than usual but I've put on nine kilos in the last year. My motions are hard and my hair has started to fall out.

CASE 13

A 50-year-old housewife, who had been well until four months previously,

(1) _____ of tiredness and

(2) _____. She had (3) _____

9 kg weight in the year before she

(4) _____ to her GP although she denied eating more than usual. She

was (5) _____ and she noticed that her hair had started to fall out.

Express your idea:

Write a short case report about this 60-year-old man:

“ I haven't been myself for several months now. I feel completely worn out after doing anything. I've been off my food and I've lost ten kilos in weight.

Write in the past tense and use medical terms for the underlined expressions. Practise writing similar case reports for your own patients.