

Real Talk #012 – At the drugstore

Episode description

Getting sick is a real pain, especially if you have to get help in English! In this episode, Andrew and Morag teach you everything you need to know to get help from a pharmacist. Unfortunately, getting sick when travelling is very common. So if you're thinking of travelling to an English-speaking country, don't miss this episode!

Fun fact

Did you know that sodas and soft drinks were originally considered medicine? When carbonated drinks first became popular in the early 1800s, they were only available from soda shops in pharmacies!

Expressions included in the learning materials

- To get to the bottom of [something]
- Terms for illness (a nasty bug)
- To keep an eye on [something or someone]
- To get back on [your] feet
- Describing pain (dull, throbbing, etc.)



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

OK, today we are going to do a Real Talk episode. Real Talk is the series where we take a close look at expressions that are very important for everyday life in an English-speaking country.

Morag: In this episode, we're going to learn how to buy over-the-counter medicine at a drugstore.

Andrew: Yeah. There are two kinds of medicines that you can buy when you feel sick: over-the-counter drugs and prescription drugs. But today we're going to focus on over-the-counter drugs. And, hey, Morag, by the way, what is the difference between over-the-counter and prescription medication?

Morag: Well, prescription drugs or medication require a prescription, which is a fancy word for a doctor's note. These drugs are usually for more serious illnesses. Over-the-counter drugs, on the other hand, don't require a prescription at all. You can just go to the drugstore and buy them from the pharmacist.

Andrew: That's right. There's one more thing that might be a little confusing for the listeners, and I'd like to clear that up. So that's the difference between three words: drugstore, pharmacy, and chemist. Morag, I'll ask you again ... I'm sorry, I'm picking on you a little bit today, but what is the difference between these three words?

Morag: Well, luckily I know, and all of them refer to the same basic thing. A drugstore, pharmacy, and chemist are all places where you can buy medicine, over-the-counter or prescription.

But here in North America, we don't actually use the word chemist. That's just in the UK.

Andrew: Yes. Now, Morag, I use the words drugstore and pharmacy interchangeably. I don't really have a preference. Both words are in my vocabulary. What about you?

- Morag: Had to think about it for a second there, Andrew. But I'm pretty sure that I use drugstore to refer to the whole building that the pharmacy is located in.
- Andrew: OK.
- Morag: And pharmacy for the specific section where you go and talk to a pharmacist.
- Andrew: Hmm, very interesting.
- Morag: But that might just be me.
- Andrew: Yeah. I think we can use both words, but you are right. To be very specific, the pharmacy is the section of a drugstore where you can buy over-the-counter and prescription medication.
- Morag: Yes.
- Andrew: But almost always, a pharmacy is located inside of a drugstore, which is a store that sells ... Well, lots of different things, right?
- Morag: Yeah. They sell household goods. Just yesterday I said to my roommate that I was going to pop out to the drugstore to get some paper towel. I would not say that I was going to pop out to the pharmacy to get some paper towel.
- Andrew: That's a very good example for the difference between these two words. So drugstore, then, is more of a general store where lots of household items are sold. The pharmacy is specifically for medicine, but you can find a pharmacy inside a drugstore.
- Morag: Sorry to make that more difficult.
- Andrew: No, I'm glad **we got to the bottom of it**. That's great.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Let's outline the plan for this episode. We'll begin by listening to a conversation between a pharmacist and a customer. Then we'll take a close look at the conversation and examine all the key expressions you need to know to buy over-the-counter medicine in English.
- Morag: Awesome. We'll take a listen to the conversation right after this message.
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Pharmacist: Good afternoon. Can I help you with anything?

Customer: Hi. I'm looking for something to take for my cold.

Pharmacist: I can help you with that. What are your symptoms?

Customer: I'm super congested. I have a headache and a sore throat and a slight fever.

Pharmacist: You must have that **nasty bug** that's going around. I recommend you take this pill. It's very effective.

Customer: It won't make me feel tired, will it? I need to be awake during the day **to keep an eye on my kids**.

Pharmacist: No, it shouldn't. It's non-drowsy.

Customer: Thanks very much for your help.

Pharmacist: You're welcome. Feel better soon.

Andrew: In the conversation, a customer goes to the pharmacy because he has a severe cold. The pharmacist helps him select some medicine that will help him **get back on his feet** in no time.

Morag: That's right. He's going to feel better in no time. We're going to examine three key areas of this conversation that are very important, and that you're likely to encounter during a chat with a pharmacist.

Andrew: Absolutely. And so key expression number one is a question. What are your symptoms? What are your symptoms? And, Morag, let's listen to that part of the dialogue just a couple more times.

Pharmacist: What are your symptoms? What are your symptoms?

Andrew: All right. So, Morag, you're my human dictionary today. Can you define symptom? What is a symptom?

Morag: Well, a symptom is some indication or feature of a sickness or a disease. So it is what that sickness or disease causes in you, what you show from it. So, say for a cold, a runny nose is a symptom.

Andrew: Exactly. And this is a very common question that you need to know how to answer whenever you go to the pharmacy looking for advice, or even if you see the doctor or go to the hospital. It's a question you're gonna be asked, so you should know how to talk about symptoms for common illnesses.



- Morag: Yeah, that's right.
- Andrew: I'm curious. What are some alternative ways that we could phrase this question, "What are your symptoms?" Can you think of a different question you might hear that has the same meaning?
- Morag: "What's wrong" or "What's the matter?"
- Andrew: Yeah, "What's the matter?" I like this one.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: What about, "Can you tell me how you're feeling?"
- Morag: That's a good one too. It's very open ended.
- Andrew: Right. So all of these questions—"What's the matter?" "What's wrong?" "Can you tell me how you're feeling?" "What are your symptoms?"—they all have the same meaning and they're all ways to inquire about how you feel.
- Morag: It's all about someone asking, "What is it that is making you come here and talk to me today?"
- Andrew: Exactly. Gotta get you the medicine to make you feel better.
- Morag: Mmhmm!
- Andrew: All right, Morag, let's move on to our second key area. I'm hesitant to call it a key expression because it's not really an expression. But it's a key area of the conversation that we heard. And it is, "I'm super congested," "I have a headache and a sore throat and a slight fever." OK? Let's listen to that part of the conversation a couple more times.

Customer:	I'm super congested. I have a headache and a sore throat and a slight fever. I'm super congested. I have a headache and a sore throat and a slight fever.
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- Andrew: Morag, what's going on here with this line? What is the customer communicating?
- Morag: The customer is communicating that they do not feel well. They probably have a cold.
- Andrew: Yeah. So this is just a list of symptoms, right?
- Morag: Mmhmm.



- Andrew: These are symptoms. Congestion, headache, sore throat, slight fever. This is the answer to that previous question.
- Morag: Mmhmm. It's the sort of thing that the pharmacist needs, your list of symptoms, to be able to tell you what sort of drugs you need to take.
- Andrew: Precisely.
- Morag: If you only had a headache, they would probably give you something different.
- Andrew: Yeah, that's true. Let's go over a list of common symptoms for, well, everyday minor illnesses, Morag.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: The first one I want to talk about, this is a funny, funny expression in English. A runny nose.
- Morag: Or a stuffy nose. They're the same thing and they ... They both sound very silly to me.
- Andrew: Yeah, they're funny. So a runny nose or a stuffy nose is just when you've got a lot of gunk in your nose and you might be sniffing a lot, too—
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: When you have either one of these symptoms.
- Morag: One thing that often goes along with that is a sore throat. And that's where, well, your throat is sore. It might hurt to swallow or feel like you have a ... Like a frog in your throat. That's another interesting expression.
- Andrew: Yeah, a frog in your throat.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: I like that one. Something is stuck in your throat, that type of feeling.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: So along with this is a very common symptom, the cough. A cough, right? You can say to the pharmacist, "Oh, I have a cough." And this just means that you are coughing a lot. "Heggh, heggh."



- Morag: Now that sounded like a dry cough. They might ask if you have a dry cough. And that's what you just did, Andrew. "Heggh, heggh." You can also have a different sort, but that's when it's really far down in your lungs. And if you have one of those coughs, you should probably go see a doctor.
- Andrew: The other type of cough is called a wet cough, or sometimes a productive cough. And this is kind of gross but it's productive because you're producing mucus and gunk that's coming out of your body when you're coughing, so.
- Morag: Let's hope you don't have that kind of cough.
- Andrew: It's kind of gross, but it's easy to remember—
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: The word productive because you're producing something when you cough. A couple of other symptoms that are very common with colds and fevers, well, one is a body ache.
- Morag: Mmhmm. Saying that you have a body ache is much more helpful than just saying, "I hurt." Because a body ache is that thing that's associated with flus and other, sort of, more major common illnesses where you just hurt all over.
- Andrew: And if your head is sore, well, then you have a headache. So we have these two expressions to talk about. Pain, especially **dull**, **throbbing** pain—
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: If it's in your head, it's a headache. If it's in the rest of your body, then it's a body ache.
- Morag: Another symptom that you might need help from a pharmacist for is an upset stomach or nausea. You can use upset stomach as a catchall term for intestinal distress. Is there another way you can phrase that, Andrew?
- Andrew: Intestinal distress?
- Morag: Yes.
- Andrew: For all things related to stomach pain or problems.
- Morag: So if you're having issues caused by some food that you ate, you can go to a pharmacist and say you have an upset stomach and they'll give you some help.
- Andrew: Yeah, or if you're perhaps on a road trip and you're feeling a little carsick?

- Morag: Hmm.
- Andrew: Like you might want to throw up, you can tell the pharmacist you have an upset stomach.
- Morag: Good point, yeah.
- Andrew: And, finally, the last symptom that we will talk about today is fever. Fever, so you have a fever. Your body temperature is high. Maybe you're sweating but feeling cold at the same time. This is a classic symptom of the flu and of colds, too. So this is another symptom that you may encounter.
- Morag: OK, Andrew, let's move on to our third expression, it's non-drowsy. So our third expression, again, is it's non-drowsy. And let's listen to that part of the conversation just a couple more times.

Pharmacist: It's non-drowsy. It's non-drowsy.

- Andrew: OK, Morag, I'm not going to ask you this time to define non-drowsy. I'll take a stab at it. So drowsy means sleepy, OK? If you're feeling drowsy, you're feeling very sleepy and very lazy and lethargic. So if we describe a medicine as non-drowsy, then it means that if you take this medicine, you're not going to going to feel a side effect of being sleepy. You won't become sleepy, all right?

You can get medicine in, actually, two kinds. There's drowsy and non-drowsy. But if you need to be alert during the day because you have to go to work, or you have to drive a car, then definitely be sure to buy non-drowsy medicine.

If you're lucky, though, and you can just stay at home and rest, then drowsy might be a better option for you. You can take a nice, deep nap.

- Morag: Do note that not all drowsy medications are labelled like that. Most things that are non-drowsy, like antihistamines for allergies or cold medication, things that will often cause you to be sleepy, those are labelled as non-drowsy ... Well, when they're non-drowsy. But often their drowsy counterparts don't actually have that written on the box. So it's always good to go talk to your friendly pharmacist.
- Andrew: Very, very good point, Morag, that non-drowsy medicine usually has it right on the packaging. It will say non-drowsy. Drowsy medicine doesn't say drowsy on the packet.
- Morag: You just need to know that it's usually drowsy, which can difficult, especially if you're travelling.



- Andrew: Yes, definitely. And like you said, it's always a good idea to chat with the pharmacist before taking any medicine because you never know what the side effects can be. Like you said, you might just take a medicine and then, oh, feel very sleepy, very drowsy all of a sudden.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: This is a side effect. And there might be other side effects, too. It's a great idea to converse with the pharmacist to find the medicine that works best for you.
- Morag: I completely agree.
- Andrew: That brings us to the end of today's episode.
- Morag: Don't forget that we will be replaying the conversation from earlier one more time at the end of the show, so stay tuned for that.
- Andrew: That's right. And if you enjoyed today's episode, please support us. Leave us a five-star ranking and a review on iTunes, and tell your friends to listen to Culips.
- Morag: Also, if you have any questions or comments for us, you can always send a message through our Facebook page, at facebook.com/culipspodcast, or our website, Culips.com.
- Andrew: That's it for now. We'll be back soon with another episode.
- Morag: Goodbye, everybody.
- Andrew: Bye.

- Pharmacist: Good afternoon. Can I help you with anything?
- Customer: Hi. I'm looking for something to take for my cold.
- Pharmacist: I can help you with that. What are your symptoms?
- Customer: I'm super congested. I have a headache and a sore throat and a slight fever.
- Pharmacist: You must have that **nasty bug** that's going around. I recommend you take this pill. It's very effective.
- Customer: It won't make me feel tired, will it? I need to be awake during the day **to keep an eye on my kids**.
- Pharmacist: No, it shouldn't. It's non-drowsy.



Customer: Thanks very much for your help.

Pharmacist: You're welcome. Feel better soon.

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Detailed Explanations

To get to the bottom of [something]

When something has been fully investigated and the truth about it has been found, you **got to the bottom of it**.

For example, in this episode Morag and Andrew discuss the difference between the terms “pharmacy” and “drugstore.” After talking about it for a while, they conclude that a pharmacy refers to the part of the drugstore from which you can get medicine. Because they discovered the truth of the relationship between the two words, we can say that they **got to the bottom of the problem**.

To get to the bottom of [something] is most often used to talk about ideas or situations about which the truth is unknown. So if you want to understand a confusing or mysterious situation, you want to **get to the bottom of it**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get to the bottom of [something]**:

Jennie:	Have you noticed that the dryer is taking a really, really long time to dry clothes these days?
Marc:	Yeah, I have noticed that. The last time I did laundry, it took 2 hours for my clothes to dry!
Jennie:	Do you think we should get a new dryer?
Marc:	Maybe? I think we should call a repair guy first—maybe they can get to the bottom of the problem and fix the dryer.

Paula:	Oh, Sam, you don't sound so good. You've had that cough for quite a while now!
Sam:	I know, I know. I've been coughing for over a month.
Paula:	You should really go see a doctor. It doesn't seem like it's going to go away on its own.
Sam:	You're right. Hopefully I can get an appointment soon and get to the bottom of why I'm still coughing .

Terms for illness (a nasty bug)

When you're not feeling well, you can say that you're sick or ill. However, there are lots of different types of illnesses, and just as many English terms to describe them. When you're going to a pharmacist to get medicine, it's important to be able to tell them what's wrong.

In this episode, we covered some common symptoms, but now we'll look at a few terms that describe the most common illnesses:

- **A bug** is a slang term for a non-serious illness caused by a virus or bacteria. It is a general term that can mean almost any kind of mild illness. In this episode's dialogue, the pharmacist said that the customer had **a nasty bug**. **A nasty bug** describes an illness that is very unpleasant, but is still not serious or life-threatening.
- **A cold** is a common sickness that affects mostly the nose and throat. If you have a runny nose, a cough, and a sore throat, and are tired and sore, you probably have **a cold**.
- **The flu** is a more serious illness than **a cold**, although the symptoms are similar. The symptoms of **the flu** are fever, chills and sweating, sore throat, coughing, body ache, weakness and fatigue (tiredness), and headache.
- **Food poisoning** is a common but potentially serious problem caused by bacteria. If you experience diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, dehydration, and fever, you probably have a case of **food poisoning**.

Now you know the terms for the most common illnesses. So, if you have **a cold**, you can simply tell the pharmacist, "I'm sick with **a cold**" instead of listing all your symptoms.

Here are a couple more examples with **terms for illness**:

Sasha: I have **a nasty bug**. I'm pretty sure it's **the flu**. Can you recommend some medication to help me feel better?

Pharmacist: **The flu**? You have a fever and sore muscles, and are feeling weak and tired?

Sasha: That's right.

Pharmacist: Just a minute. I'll grab something to help you.

Jean: I need to talk to Adam but I can't find him. Is he not at work today?

Emily: No, he's at home with **a bad cold**.

To keep an eye on [something or someone]

To keep an eye on is an idiom that means to watch something or someone carefully. **To keep an eye on** is used in situations where something or someone needs to be watched to prevent a bad event from happening.

So, if you ask someone **to keep an eye on something**, you're asking them to look after that thing for you and make sure nothing bad happens to it.

When you **keep an eye on someone**, the meaning can change a little. **Keeping an eye on a person** can either mean making sure that nothing bad happens to them, or making sure that they don't do anything bad. In both cases, however, **keeping an eye on** means watching to prevent a bad situation.

For example, in this episode's dialogue, the customer mentions that they need to stay awake to **keep an eye on their kids**. In other words, they can't feel sleepy because they need to watch their kids to make sure they're not getting into trouble. The customer could mean either watching to prevent harm from happening to their kids, or to prevent their kids from causing harm.

Here are a couple more examples with **to keep an eye on [something or someone]**:

Ann:	Hey, I need to use the washroom. Do you think you could keep an eye on my stuff for a couple minutes?
Mike:	No problem. I'll make sure it's all still here when you get back. Nothing will get stolen under my watch!
Ann:	Thanks!

Josie:	Heads up, my cousin Andrew is coming out with us tonight.
Luke:	Oh, man, that guy is such a troublemaker. Do you remember the last time we went drinking with him?
Josie:	I think so. Didn't he try and steal a street sign?
Luke:	Yup, and the time before that he got into two fights!
Josie:	Well, he'll be with us tonight again. We should keep an eye on him and make sure he doesn't do anything stupid.
Luke:	I agree. We can't lose track of him, whatever we do.

To get back on [your] feet

To get back on [your] feet is an expression that means to become healthy again after being sick or injured for a period of time. You can use this phrase with either the verb “**to get**” or “to be.”

This is an easy expression to picture. When someone is ill or injured, they often have to spend time resting and lying down. It's only when they're healthy again that they'll be able to stand up and walk around. So, **getting back on your feet** is another way to say being well enough to get out of bed and resume your normal activities.

This expression is often used to encourage a sick person to get better. For example, if you're talking to a friend who is suffering an illness, you might say, “If you rest for a while, I'm sure you'll **get back on your feet** soon.”

Another common way to use this expression is the set phrase “**to get back on your feet** in no time.” This is another way of saying getting healthy again quickly. For example, in this episode Andrew says that some medicine will help the customer in our dialogue “**get back on his feet** in no time.” In other words, the medicine will help him feel better shortly.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get back on [your] feet**:

Harold:	Hey, Kate, it's good to see you!
Kate:	Good to see you too!
Harold:	You were away from work for quite a long time. What happened?
Kate:	I fell on some ice and injured my back pretty badly. I had to spend a long time resting and doing physical therapy before I could come back to work,
Harold:	That's awful! Well, I'm glad to see that you are back on your feet .

Elijah:	How's your brother doing? I heard he was pretty sick.
Bea:	Yeah, he caught a bad case of pneumonia a couple weeks ago. He's doing a lot better now, though. I think he's going to get back on his feet in no time.
Elijah:	That's great news! I'm glad he's almost better.
Bea:	Me too! I was really worried about him for a while there.

Describing pain (dull, throbbing, etc.)

While we spent most of this episode talking about types of illnesses and different symptoms, sometimes you need to get medicine simply because you're in pain. When you're talking to a pharmacist or a doctor, being able to describe the type of pain you're in can be as important as telling them your symptoms.

Here are a few of the most common types of pain that have specific names:

- People commonly use the term **stomach ache** to describe any type of pain or discomfort in the digestive system. Whether it's your stomach or your intestines that are in pain, you can say you have **a stomach ache**.
- **A headache** is any pain that you feel on the inside of your head that doesn't go away quickly. If you hit your head, the pain you feel where you hit it is not **a headache**. If you have **a headache**, you might feel pain behind your eyes, at the base of your skull, in your forehead, or all over!
- **A migraine** is a more serious type of headache. **Migraines** often last for days, and may come with vision problems and nausea.

There are also many adjectives that we use to describe types of pain more generally. For example, in this episode Andrew mentioned **dull, throbbing pain**. Here are some more adjectives that are commonly used to describe types of pain:

- Sudden pains: **sharp, piercing, stabbing**
- Mild but persistent pain: **gnawing, dull, sore**
- Extreme pain: **raging, severe, agonizing**

Here are a couple more examples of **describing pain**:

Pharmacist: You said you're having stomach pains. Can you describe them to me?

Patrick: It's a **dull, gnawing** pain.

Pharmacist: That sounds like an intestinal issue. Here, this will calm your stomach.

Julie: Wow, nice cast! I guess you broke your arm? Did it hurt?

Joe: Did it hurt? It was **agonizing**!



Quiz

1. Which of these is not a term for a common type of pain?

- a) body ache
- b) headache
- c) stomach ache
- d) foot ache

2. Which of these phrases can you use to mean becoming healthy again after being ill or injured?

- a) to get back at someone
- b) to have your back
- c) to get back on your feet
- d) to be right back

3. When someone says they have a bug, they mean:

- a) they're sick
- b) they're tired
- c) they're feeling energetic
- d) they're injured

4. When you investigate a problem fully, you can say you:

- a) reached the top of it
- b) found it out
- c) got to the bottom of it
- d) fixed it up

5. When you keep an eye on something, you are _____ it.

- a) fixing
- b) watching
- c) learning about
- d) listening to



Quiz Answers

1.d 2.c 3.a 4.c 5.b

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St. Clair

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Study guide writer: Morag St. Clair

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox