

Biennial health check

Episode description

In this bonus episode, Andrew talks about going for a health checkup. Plus, in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you a useful idiomatic expression: **a shock to your system**.

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: I recently went for an annual health check. Well, actually, I should say more specifically, biennial health check. If you don't know what this word biennial means in English, don't worry, because neither did I, and I actually had to google it. And even after googling it, I had to check how to pronounce the word. So, guys, if you ever feel discouraged, because you don't know what a word means, or how to pronounce it just from reading it, that's OK because even native speakers, and professional English teachers like myself, we have to go through this sometimes in English as well. And no matter how fluently you can speak, no one knows all the words, that's just a fact of life.

So anyways, biennial means once every two years. And last year, I actually missed my annual health check, my yearly health check, because I stupidly missed the deadline and when I went to make an appointment, there were no openings available. I can't remember exactly, but I think that may have been due to the COVID craziness of the time. But anyways, I didn't make that same mistake this year. No, no, no. I already got in trouble from my wife for missing last year's appointment, and I didn't want to go through that again. So, I made sure to make my appointment for this year. And a few weeks ago, I went to the hospital and had my health check, and it was a very interesting experience. So today, in this episode, I'm going to tell you all about it. And some of the interesting things that the results from the checkup had to say.

This is bonus episode 33 of the Culips English Podcast, and I'm your host and study buddy, Andrew. There's a 100% free interactive transcript that goes along with this episode, and you can get it just by visiting our website, [Culips.com](https://www.culips.com). Or by clicking the link in the description for this episode. And if you haven't checked out the interactive transcript feature on our website yet, I really recommend that you test it out. It's an awesome tool that you can use for learning new vocabulary, for improving your listening comprehension,

and even for practicing your pronunciation. And if you're hungry for more English lessons after you finish this episode, don't worry, we have you covered. And just by visiting our website, you'll find over 600 audio lessons.

So, let's get back to the story about my health check, and I'll start by sharing some interesting things that I've noticed about the annual health check system that they have here in place in Korea, where I live. As a Canadian, it's very different from what I'm used to back home. So, first of all, going for an annual health check is something that I don't think many people in Canada do. Doctors recommend that you should go for a health check when you turn 40 years old, and after you turn 40 years old, then you should go regularly for health checks. But before then, it's not really strongly recommended for most people as long as you're healthy. And even some of the people that I know in Canada who are over 40 years old, don't go for a health check very often. Maybe they only go to the doctor when they feel sick instead of going for a preventative checkup. Of course, I'm speaking generally here and in Canada, there are some people who go for yearly checkups. But overall, I feel like it's not something that people do regularly.

However, here in Korea, I've noticed that it is something that many people do every year. And I think why that is, is because many people receive this as a benefit from their employer. And health checks in Korea usually cost somewhere between 200 to 500 American dollars. But as I said, you get them for free as a benefit from your employer. Not everyone, but many people get this as a benefit from their employer. And I'm lucky enough to count myself as one of these people. So, when you make your appointment for the health check, you can choose from many different options about what parts of your body that you want to get checked out. I'm assuming that every benefit package is different, but in my case, I couldn't get a detailed full-body exam. So, I had to select the parts of my body that I felt were the most important to get looked at in detail by a doctor. I usually cycle through different body parts each time. So, for example, this year, I didn't do a lung checkup, I did that last time, there were no problems, so I skipped it this year, and instead,

I did a brain checkup. Anyway, when you make your appointment and you do that online, you can just choose the options of different exams and tests that you want to receive.

On the day of the appointment, you have to go to a special hospital. Now, the hospital isn't a regular hospital, like I'm used to back home in Canada. In Canada, and in the USA as well, a hospital is a huge building that you go to, if you have an emergency. Maybe you need to have surgery, or you need to get treatment for a serious disease, or maybe even to give birth to a baby, those kinds of procedures. But the hospital that I went to for the health check was nothing like this. In fact, this hospital is only for doing these health checks. You can't go there if you're sick, it's only for getting a medical checkup performed. The hospital, however, is very big, it's six floors high, and each floor has many different rooms, where you can go for different medical tests. So, when I arrived at the hospital, I went to the very top floor, and I checked in, and here they gave me a wristband and told me my locker number and showed me where the change room was. So, I went into the changing room and used the wristband to open my locker, and I found a hospital gown and slippers inside the locker. It was a really cool high-tech wristband that actually served a very important purpose in the health check, which I'll tell you about in just a second.

However, I had a unique cultural experience, I could say maybe culture shock is more appropriate, in the locker room. OK, so one cultural difference that I've noticed between Canada and Korea is how places like locker rooms and bathrooms are taken care of by the staff. Now, this doesn't happen all the time, of course, but it's happened to me several times. And I've always found it to be a little shocking. But that is that sometimes when I go into a locker room, or a change room or a washroom the janitor or the cleaner is a woman, usually a middle-aged woman. And I've always found this to be just a little bit awkward. Like when I went to go into the hospital change room to change into my hospital gown. There was a woman cleaning right beside my locker. So, I was like, "What am I supposed to do just change in front of her?" I don't know, it felt a little awkward. And while this was happening, there were several other guys just stripping down and changing into their

hospital gown like it was no big deal at all. So, I felt like this was a slight cultural difference that was affecting me but not affecting the other people. Anyways, thankfully, the cleaning lady left to another part of the locker room after only a moment. So, I was able to change into my gown. And I just think that in Canada, this would be very unlikely to happen. At least it's never happened to me, I imagine that most men's rooms are cleaned by men, or if it were cleaned by someone else, it would probably be closed first, and then cleaned, and then reopened. That was just an interesting thing that I noticed that happened at the hospital.

Anyways, let's get back to the story. So, after changing into my gown, I went back to the waiting room, which again was on the sixth floor, and the staff there told me that I should go to room number one. A good place to start, room number one. So, I went to room number one and outside the door was a computer monitor displaying a list of names. And there was a little circular pad under the monitor, and when I scanned my bracelet, my wristband, on that pad, then my name was added to the waiting list. I then took a seat and waited for my name to be called. And when it was my turn, my name flashed up on a big TV that was in the room and told me to go inside the door. So, I thought that was a really cool and high-tech way of organizing how you do the health check and when I finished in room number one, the nurse then told me the number of the next room that I should go to. And again, I went to that room, I scanned my bracelet, I waited in line, and just went from check to check to check this way. All of the different checks that I did on this floor of the hospital were just basic things like they took a blood sample, they checked my weight, my height, they checked my blood pressure, my vision, my hearing, just by basic things like that. And after I finished all of these basic checks, then I was told to go down to the next floor. And I repeated, essentially the same process of going from room to room to room on this floor and just doing many, many different little checks in each room. And I kept going down. So, I started on the sixth floor, and I made my way, you know, to the fifth floor, fourth floor, third floor all the way down to the bottom. A lot of the checks that I had were ultrasound checks, I got all of my organs checked out, my heart, I did a CT scan of my

brain and many other checks that I can't even remember all of them right now, but there were many that I did.

And then finally, the last thing that I had to do was a urine test. So, the nurse gave me a cup and a test tube, and I had to pee into the cup, and then I deposited the test tube into a fridge that was waiting outside of the bathroom. Sorry, TMI, right? TMI. TMI means too much information. And it's an expression, we say when we talk about the embarrassing details of the body or something that's slightly disgusting or gross, like peeing into a cup. Anyway, even if it is TMI, it's good to know about how to talk about these things in English, because, hey, you never know when you might find yourself at a hospital having to do a check like this. It's a fact of life, right? Something that we all have to do from time to time. And let me tell you guys, I was happy to finish with the urine test because I arrived at the hospital around 9am. And I assumed that it would be one of the first things that I did when I arrived. I remember that last time when I did my health check, it was the very first thing that I did. As soon as I checked in, they made me go do the urine test. However, this time, it was the very last thing that they had me do. And because of all the people at the hospital, it was really, really busy. I didn't actually finish my health check until around 12:45 pm. And by that time, I really had to use the washroom. So, I was super relieved to be able and finally go do that check and get it out of the way and wrap up my checkup for this year.

So, when everything was finally finished, I went back to the top floor of the hospital, I changed out of my gown, and I went back to the front desk to give my bracelet back to the staff. The staff then gave me a coupon. And I could use that coupon for a free meal from a number of restaurants that were located in the basement of the building. There were several food options available, which was very exciting for me, and I had to think carefully about what to eat. The classic meal to eat in this situation, I think for most Korean people, is a kind of rice porridge, but I was more tempted by the other menu items to be honest. And there were two that caught my attention, a sandwich or Korean style curry and rice.

And in the end, the curry won. So, I went to the curry restaurant, I enjoyed just a small meal of curry and rice, and then left the hospital and went home.

A few weeks later, I received the results of my health check in the mail, the results of all the checks and the tests are printed into a book. And the book is thick, it was at least 50 pages. And without going into too many details of the results, I can say that thankfully I am in good health. There's nothing to be concerned about. But I did spend about an hour going through all of the results with a fine-tooth comb. Have you heard me use that expression on Culips before? To go through something with a fine-tooth comb. Of course, a comb, spelt C-O-M-B. Comb. That's a tool that you use for making your hair look neat and tidy, right? It's usually made from plastic, and it has these many small, thin pieces on one side that you can use to run through your hair when you're styling your hair. Now we call these parts of the comb the teeth. And in this expression fine doesn't mean good, right? Like how are you? I'm fine. I'm good. No, it doesn't mean this. Here, fine means small, slender, and thin. So, a fine-tooth comb then is a comb with many very slender and thinly spaced-out teeth on it. I think it's the kind you would use for the fine details and styling of your hair. At least that's what I think. As a bald guy myself, I haven't used a comb in years, so I don't really know.

But anyways, that is what a fine-tooth comb is. That is its literal definition. But just a moment ago, I used it in its idiomatic sense when I talked about going through my health check results with a fine-tooth comb. And when we use the expression this way, it means to pay attention to all of the small details very, very carefully. And I had to go through those results with a fine-tooth comb. Because of course, I live in Korea, and the results were written in Korean. Just like you guys, I'm a language learner. Except I'm learning Korean instead of English. My Korean reading is OK, it's decent. But I'm way out of my depth when reading medical literature like this. So, I grabbed my phone, I opened this app that many people in Korea will be familiar with called Papago, which is a Korean-English translating app. And I started working my way through the results and looking up many

words as I went along. But as I was going through the report, it looked like I was coming to the end of the report, but I was only halfway through the book. So, I was like, "What's going on here?" And I flipped forward to see what the extra stuff at the back was, and that's when I discovered that the hospital had very kindly included an English translation for the results as well. So, I laughed about that, but was also kind of frustrated, because I could have saved myself a lot of time and effort just by looking at the translation first, but I didn't notice that it was tucked away there in the back. But it was nice to have, I'm happy they included it for me. And, I don't know, spending a little extra time with the language that you're learning is probably never a complete waste of time, right? At least that's how I'm going to think about it.

Anyway, I love looking through the results of these kinds of health checks and seeing what my blood tests and other tests reveal about my health. The way that this hospital delivers the report is kind of like the report card that you get from school. And that gives you an A, B, C, D, or E grade on many different categories. They also give you an overall health score, and I got 96 out of 100, which I thought was pretty good. But a few days after getting my report, my wife's friend was over at her house and she told me that she actually went to the same hospital recently, and had just received her health report as well, and she got a 97 out of 100. So as a competitive person, I was like, "Ah, I didn't win." But at least I'm healthy, and my wife's friend is healthy, as well. So, that is very good. My report also said that my health age was 33 years old. Even though my real age is 38 years old. The hospital also predicted that if I died due to natural causes, then I'll probably die at 87 years old. So, since I'm 38 now, that means I only have 49 years remaining. That is unless we have a technological breakthrough that can help us to defeat disease and death before I turn 87.

You know, looking at the way AI technologies have developed in just this year alone makes me think that it's very, very likely that the human race will find a way to extend our lives in the next 20 or 30 years. But if that kind of technology doesn't come around, or

maybe it's not affordable for regular everyday folk like myself, well, then I have 49 years according to the health-check results. And that actually made me a little bit sad to hear. 49 years doesn't seem like that much time. I have a lot of things I want to learn, see, do, and experience, only 49 years to do them. On top of that, how many of those 49 years will I be able to be active? Everyone knows that we tend to slow down as we age. So, you know, maybe only 39 or 35 of those years could be active years. Anyway, in the end, the results of my medical check have motivated me and reminded me that I need to live life to the fullest and work hard to accomplish my goals today, because you never know what tomorrow holds. And I think this is a good mindset for me to have going into 2023 because a new year is always a time to refocus on what's important to us and start again new. But guys, I'm going to talk about the new year in the next bonus episode because that one's going to be the last episode for 2022, and I can't think of a better topic for that episode than plans, goals, and dreams for 2023.

So, this year's Christmas has come and gone, and I hope all of you who celebrate Christmas had a great one. Every time I make a post on social media asking listeners for suggestions about topics you'd like us to chat about on Culips, there's always many people who ask us to make a Christmas episode or holiday episodes. Now, because Christmas is one of the most important holidays in English-speaking countries. We've actually covered it quite a few times over the years on Culips, and we did so again this year. But this year, there was a twist, there was a twist, I liked that expression, there was a twist, it's a good one to know. Twist here means a surprise or an unexpected change in a story. And this year, our Christmas episode had a twist, because for the first time in Culips history, we were able to talk about how Christmas is celebrated in the UK with our very own British host Anna. So, I know Christmas is finished for this year, but it's still the holiday season. And I think you'll still enjoy our Christmas Chatterbox episode if you haven't heard it yet. In the episode, Anna and I compare and contrast how Christmas is celebrated in my country, Canada, and in her country, the UK, but also in South Korea and Spain, the countries that

we currently reside in. You can find the episode on our website Culips.com. And of course, there's an interactive transcript and helpful study guide available for all Culips members.

And I have some good news to share with you. And that is Kassy is currently on vacation right now here in South Korea. So, we're planning to meet up soon and to record a bunch of new episodes together, and maybe even film some video content and do a live stream. We're just working out the details right now. I was talking to Kassy yesterday, but she's still not 100% sure of her schedule and plan. But as soon as we grab a date, I'm going to make an announcement about when exactly the livestream will happen. And I'll let you know as soon as possible. Kassy told me that arriving in Korea from Bangkok was a real shock to her system because here in Korea, we're currently going through a period of really cold weather, and there's even a lot of snow and ice on the ground. And as you can imagine, it must be difficult to make that adjustment when you're coming from a warm place like Thailand. Anyway, I'm looking forward to seeing Kassy again in person real soon. And of course, I'll make sure to keep you up to date with our plans so that you can tune in and check out the live stream.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

Before I wrap up, I want to spend some time to teach you about one of the interesting idiomatic expressions I used in this episode. In fact, I said it just a moment ago when talking about Kassy. I said that it was a shock for her system to go from the warm weather of Thailand to the cold wintry weather of Korea. You know what, let's rewind, go back and listen to that part of the episode just a couple of more times, so we can hear it in context again. Let's do it.

Kassy told me that arriving in Korea from Bangkok was a real shock to her system. Because here in Korea, we're currently going through a period of really cold weather. And there's even a lot of snow and ice on the ground. And as you can imagine, it must be difficult to make that adjustment when you're coming from a warm place like Thailand.

Kassy told me that arriving in Korea from Bangkok was a real shock to her system.

So, after hearing that expression, "a shock to your system", can you guess what it means from the context? Well, here, the word "system" just means your body. So, you can think of a shock to your system as meaning the same thing as a shock to your body in either a physical way, like exposing yourself to very cold weather suddenly, or even in an emotional way as well. And this is a casual, informal idiomatic expression. We use it to describe a sudden or unexpected event or experience that has a very strong and jarring effect on our emotional or physical well-being. We can use "a shock to your system" to talk about a wide variety of experiences. For example, a sudden or unexpected event, a sudden physical sensation, such as exposure to extremely cold weather or extremely hot weather, or we can even use it to talk about psychological or emotional response to hearing a piece of news or information. And when something is a shock to your system, it can leave you feeling disoriented or overwhelmed or unprepared to deal with that situation. And of course, you can always change the "your" in the expression to match the context of the subject that you're talking about, right? So, you could say, a shock to my system, or a shock to their system, or a shock to our systems, and so on and so on. I've prepared some example sentences to help us understand how English speakers use this expression on a day-to-day basis. So, let's take a listen to those examples now. Here we go.

Example sentence number one.

She's not a morning person. So, waking up at 5am was a shock to her system.

Let's break this example sentence down. In the sentence, we hear about a woman who is not a morning person. So, if you're not a morning person, it means that you hate waking up early in the morning. But this person had to wake up early in the morning, she woke up at 5am. And it was really shocking to her, it was a shock to her system. It was like a terrible experience for her to go through, and she probably felt really sleepy and tired when she woke up.

Example sentence number two.

I'm not used to eating spicy food, so that hot sauce was a real shock to my system.

Let's break this example down. In that example, we hear from a speaker who's not used to eating spicy food. So that means that he probably doesn't like spicy food very much, and instead prefers more mellow, bland food. But anyways, he did eat some spicy food and he said that the hot sauce was a shock to his system, meaning that it was like a real shock, a real physical shock in his mouth. And maybe he even had a physical reaction to the hot flavors of the sauce, right? Maybe his face turned red, or he started to sweat and get a little bit clammy, something like this. So, even hot sauce can be a shock to your system if you're not used to eating spicy food.

Example sentence number three.

I was scrolling through my social media when I saw an announcement about my ex's engagement, it was a total shock to my system.

Let's break this final example sentence down. And I need to stress this is an example, it's nothing from my personal life guys. So, in this sentence, the speaker says that he was scrolling through his social media, you know, probably going through his Instagram feed or his Twitter feed or his Facebook feed. And he saw a post about his ex's engagement. So here an "ex", E-X is the spelling. This is what we use to talk about your previous or your prior romantic relationship, right your ex-boyfriend, your ex-girlfriend, ex-husband, ex-wife, etcetera, etcetera, whatever, whatever. So, an "ex" is your previous partner, and when the speaker of that sentence saw that his ex was now engaged, it was a shock to his system. So, he uses this expression to communicate that he was very, very shocked to hear this piece of news.

So that's the end of this episode, everyone. Thanks for listening all the way to the end and great job on completing another English study session with me. If you're looking for more English lessons to learn with, don't forget that we have hundreds available to listen to for free on our website Culips.com. I think the next bonus episode will be released a little earlier than usual, because like I said earlier, I want to hang out with you all for one more before the new year comes. So that means I'll be back in just a few days and until then take care, I'll talk to you soon. Goodbye!

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