

A Explanations

The final part of a consultation is the explanation which should cover:

- The **diagnosis** – identification of a disease from its signs and symptoms.

You're suffering from ...	This is (mainly) because ...
You've developed ...	This is why ...
You have ...	
- The **management plan**, including investigations and treatment.

I'll make you an appointment with ...	You'll be given ...
I'm going to start you on medication to ...	I expect you'll have ...
I'm going to have you admitted to ...	They may advise ...
I'll arrange for you to ...	
- General advice about any **change in lifestyle** that may be needed, for example giving up smoking or drinking less alcohol.

The nurse will give you advice on ...	I want you to ...
You should try to give up ...	It's important that you ...
- The **prognosis** – what is likely to happen because of a disease, stressing that nothing is certain.

I expect the treatment will ...	We can never be absolutely certain about ...
Hopefully we can ...	You should remain optimistic.
- Question time** – where the patient can ask questions about his/her illness.

Do you have any questions?	Is there anything you'd like to ask?
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B Using lay terms in explanations

Explanations should be given in words the patient will understand, avoiding medical jargon. Using **lay terms** – words familiar to people without medical knowledge – can help patients understand explanations. For a list of some common lay terms for conditions, parts of the body and medication, see Appendix VI on page 146.

C An explanation of angina

Having examined you, I'm confident that you're suffering from angina.

The heart is a pump. The more you do physically, the harder it has to work. But as we get older, the blood vessels which supply oxygen to the heart begin to harden and get furred up, so they become narrower. They can't supply all the oxygen the heart needs. The result is the pain you feel as angina.

Because you're experiencing pain at rest as well as on exertion, I'm going to have you admitted to the coronary care unit right away so that your treatment can start at once. You'll be given drugs to ease the pain and I expect you'll have an angiogram. They may advise surgery or angioplasty – that's a way of opening up the blood vessels to the heart so they can provide more oxygen.

You should try to give up smoking. You won't be able to smoke at all in hospital so it's a good time to stop.

I expect the treatment will improve your pain at least and may get rid of it completely. We can never be absolutely certain about the future but you should remain optimistic. Do you have any questions?

52.1 Match the stages of a consultation (1–4) with the sentences used (a–f). Look at A and C opposite to help you.

- 1 diagnosis
- 2 management
- 3 general advice
- 4 prognosis

- a I'm going to have you admitted to the coronary care unit.
- b I expect the treatment will improve your pain at least and may get rid of it completely.
- c Having examined you, I'm confident that you're suffering from angina.
- d You should try to give up smoking.
- e We can never be absolutely certain about the future but you should remain optimistic.
- f You'll be given drugs to ease the pain and I expect you'll have an angiogram.

52.2 Replace the underlined words and phrases with appropriate lay terms. Look at Appendix VI on page 146 to help you.

- 1 Mr Harris, I'm afraid your wife's suffered an acute cerebrovascular event.
- 2 The urethra runs through the middle of the prostate.
- 3 The reason for your nocturia is that your prostate is enlarged.
- 4 Do you suffer from dyspnoea when you exert yourself?
- 5 I'm going to give you an analgesic and an anti-inflammatory for your sprained ankle.
- 6 I'm putting you on anti-depressants for a short time to help you get back to normal life.

52.3 Complete the explanation of diabetes. Look at A opposite to help you.

You've (1) Type 2 diabetes. This is (2) very overweight. Your body isn't producing enough insulin. (3) you feel so thirsty and why you pass urine so frequently. It's also the reason you have this very itchy rash and you have a problem with your eyes.

The nurse will (4) your diet and I'll (5) a dietician. I'm (6) tablets to control your high blood sugar. You don't need insulin right now but it is possible you might need it in the future.

You (7) lose weight and I (8) see a podiatrist. It's important with diabetes that you take good care of your feet. You should also see your optician every six months for eye checks.

Diabetes is a serious condition and can affect your heart, blood pressure, circulation, kidneys and vision but we can limit these problems by controlling your blood sugar.

No case of diabetes can be described as mild. I'll (9) to attend the diabetic clinic every two months so we can check your progress.

(10) reduce this to six monthly visits once your condition is under control.

Is there (11) ?

Over to you



Explain a condition of your choice to a patient. Your explanation should cover the points listed in A opposite and use lay terms where possible.

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Discussing treatment

A Offering options

When discussing options with a patient, doctors may say:

There are a **couple of options** we can use. The **first option** is to try tablets like Prozac that lift you up a bit. The **other option** is counselling.

It can be caused by diet or stress. There are some quite simple tests we can do. If you're still concerned, we can refer you to a hospital.

B Advising a course of action

When advising a course of action, doctors may say:

Some time off work **might help**. If you **felt that would be helpful**, you could take a week off and see how you felt after that.

Carry on drinking lots of fluids.

If you still have some pain, you can **keep taking** paracetamol.

Other things might help, like raising the head of your bed. That's one of the simple things we could start you off with. You said you haven't tried indigestion remedies. That's **something you could try**.

C Advising patients to avoid something

When advising patients to avoid something, doctors may say:

There are a few things about your lifestyle we could address. Perhaps **cut down on** the amount you're drinking. **Giving up** smoking would help.

Cut out fatty foods.

You **should try to avoid** tight clothing, sitting in deep armchairs and bending, especially after meals.

D Warnings

When a doctor wants to warn a patient that the consequence of ignoring the advice could be serious, he or she may say:

If you aren't feeling better in 7 to 14 days, you **really must come back and see me again**.

If you keep damaging it, you're going to **end up with** a long-term problem.

If you feel that things aren't **settling**, aren't getting back to normal, it's important that you see me again.

It's very important you **don't stop taking** the tablets suddenly or your symptoms **will return**.

- 53.1** Complete the advice. Look at A, B, C and D opposite to help you.
- 1 If you smoking, you increase the risk of lung cancer and heart disease.
 - 2 Your health would improve if you alcohol completely.
 - 3 You could with a serious drug problem.
 - 4 I'm going to you with some tablets. If they don't help, we'll need to think about surgery.
 - 5 on the amount of salt you take with your food.
 - 6 I expect things will in a few days and you'll be able to get up.
 - 7 Try to situations where you feel stressed.

53.2 Match the two parts of the sentences. Look at A, B, C and D opposite to help you.

- 1 If you still have pain,
 - 2 If you find it difficult to give up smoking,
 - 3 Your symptoms will return
 - 4 If you can't get to sleep,
 - 5 Come back and see me again
 - 6 If you're still concerned,
- a try to avoid caffeine later in the day.
 - b if you find your breathlessness has increased.
 - c keep taking paracetamol.
 - d I can refer you to a consultant.
 - e if you start smoking again.
 - f I can arrange for nicotine replacement therapy.

53.3 Advise a patient with high blood pressure about physical activity. Look at the information in the table, and at C opposite to help you.

Advice for people with heart disease or high blood pressure	
Do	Avoid
Moderate, rhythmic (aerobic) exercise such as brisk walking, cycling or swimming.	Intense exercise such as weight-lifting, press-ups, heavy digging and isometric exercise.
Any regular physical activity that you are used to.	Any sport or activity that brings on angina.
Eat a low cholesterol diet.	Moving from floor to standing exercises too quickly.

You should avoid heavy digging.

You shouldn't do any heavy digging.

You could try brisk walking.

Over to you



A patient of yours, Mrs White, aged 44, has been complaining of very heavy periods. An ultrasound scan of her pelvis shows she has a small fibroid in her uterus. She asks about treatment. These options are possible:

- 1 Do nothing. The fibroid will shrink when she becomes menopausal.
- 2 See a gynaecologist who may advise removal of the fibroid or a hysterectomy.

Practise what you would say to Mrs White to advise her of these options.