



# 27

## Health and illness

### A Verb collocations referring to illnesses and injuries

In most everyday situations you can use the verbs *get* or *have* with the names of illnesses, but you will improve your written style if you can use these alternative verbs and expressions.

verb	common collocations	example
catch	a cold, the flu, a chill, pneumonia	I got soaking wet and <b>caught a cold</b> .
contract [formal]	a disease, malaria, typhoid	Uncle Jess <b>contracted malaria</b> while he was working in Africa.
develop [formal]	(lung/breast) cancer, diabetes, AIDS, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease	My grandfather <b>developed Alzheimer's disease</b> and could no longer remember things or recognise people.
suffer from	asthma, hay fever, backache	She has <b>suffered from asthma</b> all her life.
have an attack of	bronchitis, asthma, hay fever, diarrhoea	She <b>had an attack of hay fever</b> and was sneezing non-stop.
be diagnosed with	(lung/breast) cancer, AIDS, leukaemia, autism	He was <b>diagnosed with lung cancer</b> and died a year later.
suffer / sustain [formal]	(major/minor/serious/head) injuries	The driver <b>sustained serious head injuries</b> in the crash.

### B Fitness and good health

Look at this magazine questionnaire and note the collocations relating to fitness.

#### Are you in good shape?

- 1 Do you **take** regular **vigorous exercise**?
- 2 Do you eat a **balanced diet**?
- 3 Do you care about **healthy eating**?
- 4 Do you **follow** a personal **fitness programme**?
- 5 Do you always **stick to your programme**?
- 6 In general, have you **kept fit** over the last two years?



### C Talking about sickness and pain

My poor friend Gina is **terminally ill**. [She will die soon.] She suffers **excruciating/unbearable pain** most of the time. Apparently it's an **incurable illness** that runs in her family. Paul annoys everyone at work. He takes days off even for the most **trivial/minor ailments**. It's a **serious illness**, but probably not **life-threatening**. For a few days it was **acutely/intensely painful**, but now it's just a **dull ache**. My doctor **prescribed me some tablets** and they **relieved/alleviated the pain**. Lorna was **taken ill** the other day. She's in hospital. They're not sure what it is yet. I had a **heavy cold** and a **splitting headache**, so I wasn't in a good mood. [the opposite of a heavy cold is a slight cold]



In accidents, wars, etc., **things get damaged** and **people get injured**:  
 Their **car was slightly damaged** but luckily **no one was injured**.

## Exercises

**27.1** Look at A. Match the verbs and expressions on the left with their collocations on the right.

- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1 sustain           | diarrhoea      |
| 2 contract          | a cold         |
| 3 have an attack of | breast cancer  |
| 4 develop           | minor injuries |
| 5 be diagnosed with | typhoid        |
| 6 catch             | autism         |

**27.2** Use the verbs and expressions in the left-hand column of exercise 27.1 instead of the verb *get* in these newspaper extracts.

1 Many musicians who get arthritis experience the tragedy of no longer being able to play their instrument.

3 To get cancer is the most frightening experience, and people often need intense counselling to cope with it.

5 Mr Taylor escaped with bruises, but experts say he was lucky not to have got serious injuries.

2 More than 50 passengers on the flight got moderate or severe diarrhoea. Medical officials suspect the in-flight catering was responsible.

4 Millions of people get malaria each year in poorer countries, and drugs to treat it are in short supply.

6 Patients often get pneumonia while in hospital. In fact, experts now think hospitals may be the worst place to be if you are sick and weak.

**27.3** Complete the collocations. You are given the first letter of the missing words.

- 1 Flu is not a s..... illness for most people, but it can be l.....  
t..... for elderly people who are weak and who haven't been vaccinated.
- 2 Patients who are t..... ill often prefer to die at home surrounded by their loved ones.
- 3 I'm not in pain, it's just a d..... ache in my back tooth. I hate going to the dentist's.
- 4 The children have a b..... diet, with lots of fruit and vegetables and only a few sweet things now and then.
- 5 Turn that music down! I've got a s..... headache!
- 6 You shouldn't waste the doctor's time with t..... ailments. Get something at the chemist's instead.
- 7 I need to adopt a proper fitness programme and to s..... to it to get into shape again. I was in good s..... a year ago but then I became a bit lazy.
- 8 Diseases which are i..... now will be beaten one day if scientists continue to make progress with drugs and genetic science.
- 9 My aunt was t..... ill when she was on holiday. Apparently, she was in e..... pain. Luckily she had travel insurance.
- 10 I believe in h..... eating and I try to do v..... exercise every other day.
- 11 My doctor p..... me a new drug to a..... my backache. It worked!
- 12 I took a day off work yesterday. It was nothing serious, just a s..... cold.