



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

- 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.
- Patients who are t..... ill often prefer to die at home surrounded by their loved ones.
- I'm not in pain, it's just a d..... ache in my back tooth. I hate going to the dentist's.
- The children have a b..... diet, with lots of fruit and vegetables and only a few sweet things now and then.
- Turn that music down! I've got a s..... headache!
- You shouldn't waste the doctor's time with t..... ailments. Get something at the chemist's instead.
- 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.
- Diseases which are i..... now will be beaten one day if scientists continue to make progress with drugs and genetic science.
- My aunt was t..... ill when she was on holiday. Apparently, she was in e..... pain. Luckily she had travel insurance.
- I believe in h..... eating and I try to do v..... exercise every other day.
- My doctor p..... me a new drug to a..... my backache. It worked!
- I took a day off work yesterday. It was nothing serious, just a s..... cold.