EPISODE 364

Making a Doctor's Appointment

Full transcript · point of view · vocabulary review

Hi! I'm Georgiana, and I'm back with a new episode of the Speak English Now podcast—the podcast that helps you speak English fluently, with no grammar and no textbooks.

Today we're beginning a new series—four episodes designed to prepare you for **going** to the **doctor**.

Why this topic? Well, the truth is simple. At some point, whether you live abroad, travel, or study in another country, you will need medical care. And the very first step is usually the same: booking an **appointment**.

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Useful Vocabulary and Expressions

When you phone a clinic or a **doctor**'s office, you usually speak with the **receptionist** or someone in the scheduling department. Here are some very common and practical phrases you'll need:

"I'd like to **make an appointment**."

It's the standard and polite way to begin.

"Do you have any openings this week?"

Openings means available times.

"What is the earliest **appointment** available?"

Use this if you need the soonest possible option.

"I'd like to see Dr. Smith, if possible."

If you already know the **doctor**'s name, you can request them directly.

"I need to cancel my **appointment**."

Or: "I'd like to **reschedule** my appointment."

"Is this covered by insurance?"

In the US especially, it's common to ask if the visit is paid for by your insurance.

Questions You May Hear

The receptionist will also ask you some questions. Here are the most common:

"What is the reason for your visit?"

You can answer simply: "I have a fever," or "It's just a check-up," or "I need a prescription refill."

"Do you have insurance?"

You can say: "Yes, I do," or "No, I will pay **out of pocket**." (Out of pocket means you'll pay the full cost yourself.)

"Do you need a **referral**?"

In the US, sometimes your family doctor must give you permission to see a specialist.

Realistic Examples

Example 1 – **Routine Check-up**

Receptionist: "Good morning. City Clinic. How can I help you?"

Patient: "Hello, I'd like to make an appointment with Dr. Lee."

Receptionist: "What is the reason for your visit?"

Patient: "It's just a routine check-up."

Receptionist: "Okay, Dr. Lee is available next Thursday at 2 p.m. Does that work?"

Patient: "Yes, that's fine. Thank you."

Example 2 – Urgent Situation

Patient: "Hello, I feel very sick. I'd like to see a doctor as soon as possible."

Receptionist: "I'm sorry to hear that. We don't have same-day appointments, but we can see you tomorrow morning at 9 a.m."

Patient: "Yes, tomorrow morning is fine. Thank you."

Example 3 – Rescheduling

Patient: "Hello, I have an appointment on Monday at 3 p.m., but I need to reschedule."

Receptionist: "No problem. When are you available?"

Patient: "Any time on Wednesday."

Receptionist: "Okay, we have Wednesday at 11 a.m. available."

Patient: "Perfect. Thank you."

Extra Vocabulary

Walk-in clinic → a clinic where you don't need an appointment.

Cancellation fee → a charge you may pay if you cancel too late.

Now, let's practice.

Point of View

Past & Future

Notice how the verbs, pronouns, and time perspective change naturally.

First version

Past Tense - Third Person

Last Thursday, Emma decided to call the clinic. She wasn't seriously sick, but she had a strange problem. Her left ear was **making** a funny noise. Every time she moved her jaw, she heard a little "click."

When the receptionist answered, Emma said, "Hello, I'd like to make an appointment with a doctor."

The receptionist asked, "What is the reason for your visit?"

Emma explained, "My ear keeps making a clicking sound."

But the receptionist misunderstood. Her hearing wasn't very good, and she thought Emma said "chicken sound," not "clicking sound." She typed in the notes: Patient hears chicken sounds in the ear.

She offered the earliest appointment: Monday at 3 p.m. Emma agreed and wrote it down.

On Monday, the doctor read the notes and looked surprised. "So, Emma, you hear chickens in your ear?"

Emma laughed. "Not chickens! A clicking sound!"

The doctor laughed too. "That makes much more sense. Chickens in the ear would be very unusual."

Then the doctor added with a smile, "You know, maybe our receptionist needs an appointment as well. Her hearing isn't the best these days."

They both laughed, and Emma felt much more relaxed. In the end, her ear problem was nothing serious, and she left the clinic in a good mood.

Second version

Past Tense - First Person Plural

Last Thursday, we decided to call the clinic. We weren't seriously sick, but we had a strange problem. Our left ear was making a funny noise. Every time we moved our jaw, we heard a little "click."

When the receptionist answered, we said, "Hello, we'd like to make an appointment with a doctor."

The receptionist asked, "What is the reason for your visit?"

We explained, "Our ear keeps making a clicking sound."

But the receptionist misunderstood. Her hearing wasn't very good, and she thought we said "chicken sound," not "clicking sound." She typed in the notes: Patient hears chicken sounds in the ear.

She offered the earliest appointment: Monday at 3 p.m. We agreed and wrote it down.

On Monday, the doctor read the notes and looked surprised. "So, you hear chickens in your ear?"

We laughed. "Not chickens! A clicking sound!"

The doctor laughed too. "That makes much more sense. Chickens in the ear would be very unusual."

Then the doctor added with a smile, "You know, maybe our receptionist needs an appointment as well. Her hearing isn't the best these days."

We both laughed, and we felt much more relaxed. In the end, our ear problem was nothing serious, and we left the clinic in a good mood.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 **01 · make an appointment** arrange a time to see a doctor.	05 **05 · out of pocket** paid directly by the patient rather than by insurance.
02 **02 · opening** an available time in a schedule.	06 **06 · referral** official permission to see a specialist.
03 **03 · reschedule** move an appointment to another date or time.	07 **07 · receptionist** the person who answers calls and schedules visits.
04 **04 · routine check-up** a regular medical examination.	08 **08 · clicking sound** a short repeated sound, such as one made by a joint.

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