

Example of GPs script:

Patient contribution

What would you like to talk about today?

Was there anything else that you were hoping we would touch upon today?

ICE

What do you think it is?

Worst case scenario with this? You were thinking it was probably an ear infection.

Was there anything else in your mind?

Is there anything in particular that you wanted me to do for you?

Did you have any, kind of, preconceived ideas about what you wanted me to do, apart from just check you over?

PSO

Perhaps if I can find out a little bit more about you, if that's okay. So, how's this been affecting you?

How else has it affected you, apart from it annoying you and your husband? Is it affecting anything else that you do?

So, you're right handed, so naturally you want to use the phone on your right-hand side.

Do you have a headset on?

You prefer the phone, okay. And what is your role at work at the moment?

Okay, so a lot of time on the phone, in that case?

Okay. Anything else that it's stopping you from doing?

Forgive me, because I don't know you very well, perhaps you could tell me – you don't smoke?

Is it just the two of you in the house?

And how old are they?

Three and my youngest was one yesterday.

Have you got help with looking after them, if you're poorly?

Red flags

Any bad habits that I need to know – hobbies wise, or activities wise? Not a big drinker, no substances, no cocaine or anything like that.

Are you achy or sore or anything?

Have you been hot and sweaty?

Not been abroad anywhere exotic recently or anything like that?

Your periods okay?

You're breastfeeding, okay, are you taking any precautions at the moment.

Yeah, yeah. Would it be a disaster if you got pregnant?

Okay, so are you going to take precautions, do you want any advice about that.

You're happy enough?

Focussed history

Had this sort of problem before at all? Ages ago?

Not particularly prone to these sorts of things?

The other ear's okay?

Okay, good. And you've not had tonsillitis before at all?

Not prone to that or anything like that? Okay. Never had glandular fever?

No other kissing contact apart from your husband?

Okay so we're not thinking that you've picked up anything and your husbands not got any symptoms at the moment?

Oh, all right. Okay. His throat's okay, though, at the moment?

Your thyroid blood test was normal; you're not having symptoms with your thyroid at the moment? Things are okay?

Have you taken anything for this pain?

Focussed examination

Going to pop this in your ear to check your temperature, if that's okay? Your teeth are okay, when you bite down, it doesn't hurt? Your temperature at the moment is okay.

A little bit sore, okay, it's not tender in your teeth as such, though?

No pain in your face when I'm pressing on there?

Nasal symptoms, not a problem?

Let's have a look at your throat. So, not particularly inflamed, not particularly pus-y or anything like that, that's great. No obstruction in your nose. If you just close your mouth and breathe through your nose. Okay, so this is the bad ear – I'm going to look in the good ear first if that's okay. And this one. You know when you go up in a plane and you make your ears pop, can you do that at the moment?

It's not easy is it?

It's not working properly at the moment, and that's the issue, isn't it? Not particularly gland-y, that's great, you are a bit glue-y in both of your ears. I'm just going to check your hearing if that's okay, just tell me what I'm saying.

Very good, okay. [whispered] Twenty-eight.

[whispered] Forty-three.

So your hearing on both sides is not great, is it? It's not perfect but it's not bad, but you are gluey in both of your ears and I can certainly explain what's going on there. Doesn't hurt when you breathe at all? No? I'll just check your chest, if that's okay?

If you just stand up for me, and turn around, I'll just have a listen into your lungs.

Breathe away. Deep breath. Fabulous, lovely, okay. That's great. And you've been a bit sore around here, as well, haven't you?

Identify problem and explain diagnosis

Well I guess it won't come as a particular surprise in flu season, with you being a bit achy, that you've a flu-like illness.

The problem with your ears and the deafness is related to that, to the cold aspect of that, the viral aspect of that.

Your throat looks okay, but I think this is all part of the viral problem that you've got, that's causing all of these symptoms.

Check understanding

So that makes sense?

Does that all make sense?

Have you got any questions?

Develops management plan / shares management plan

Because you are on our hit-list for having it, because of your under-active thyroid. You can have them regularly if you want.

Popping exercises will help. So, the ones that you do when you go up in a plane.

If you do those repeatedly to try and help with that, and you might help that a little bit by using a decongestant that the chemist could supply for you.

Probably use a nasal decongestant. The flu, rarely in your age group, causes nasty complications, particularly since you're not prone to anything and you're not a smoker. But, if you do find that you're particularly unwell with a persistent fever and your breathing is much faster than usual, or something like that, then we're happy to see you again straight-away, just to make sure you've got no complications with the flu. But, you probably want to take symptomatic treatment for this, and that might consist of safer options, which is paracetamol, or if you've got no problems with taking aspirin - it doesn't irritate your stomach and it doesn't make you wheezy, then you could take ibuprofen in addition to that.

So, the full dose for that, if you're feeling really dreadful, would be 600mg three times a day after food - stop it if it causes indigestion or wheezing. Does that all make sense?

Most flu-like illnesses, worst symptoms will last for 3 to 5 days, and then start to improve.

But, if you're feeling worse and worse, progressively, and you're worried - let's check you out.

The cough side of things might linger on for two or three weeks, but as long as you're not particularly breathless, there's not any active treatment I can give you for that. And no treatment that I'm going to give you, apart from symptomatic treatment, is going to make much difference to be honest.

Safety net and follow up

Particularly because you came here about your ears, if you're finding you've got agony in your ear or discharge from your ear, and a high fever, we probably want to check you out for that as well.

Happy to see you again if the cough is persisting beyond three weeks or if you're particularly breathless, or agony in your ear with a high temperature, or discharge from your ear.