



**COMMENT ALLEZ-VOUS ?  
COMMENT VOUS SENTEZ-VOUS**

Words and phrases to help communication  
with medical teams

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## Comment allez vous ? / Comment sentez vous?



Communicating with your medical practitioner is not always easy. Consultants usually have a grasp of English, but nursing staff do not. It is not unusual for those who do speak some English to be really afraid of doing so. I was told by a nurse when I was a patient that this goes back to their school experiences, when mistakes made were ridiculed.

Some staff believe that since we live in France it is up to us to speak French and not up to them to speak English. What is often forgotten is that a diagnosis of any life-threatening disease causes fear, which results in what language we have being temporarily disabled.

The vocabulary lists in this booklet were first published in 'Touchlines'. They were created with the help of a number of people as an aide to those blank moments, when the vocabulary you thought you had, flew through the window. They are of course not exhaustive. We have tried to include a pronunciation guide to help you express your needs as clearly as possible. Rest assured however limited your language skills are, any effort you make is greatly appreciated!

Something I found really useful was carrying a small my pocket. Whenever I wanted a word, or heard didn't know, I wrote it down. Travelling back and forth to taxi was a marvellous source of vocabulary!



notebook in something I hospital in the

Some of the material in this booklet is drawn from work carried out by the Aquitaine Chaplaincy. It covers a range of other medical situations. The full version is available as another pdf file called 'Vocabulary Booklet'

I am grateful to Audrey Seacombe, Lise Mayer and Angela McKean for their contributions to this resource. If you have vocabulary lists dealing with other situations, and feel they would be a useful addition please send them to [presidentcsf@gmail.com](mailto:presidentcsf@gmail.com)



## BASIC LANGUAGE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

These are phrases worth learning by heart!

ENGLISH	FRENCH	PRONUNCIATION GUIDE
Slowly please	Lentement, s'il vous plaît	lontemon seel voo play
Again please	Encore s'il vous plaît	oncor seel voo play
Please repeat that	Répétez-vous s'il vous plaît	raypettay seel voo play
I didn't understand	Je n'ai pas compris	zju nay pas compree
I'm sorry	Je suis désolé(e)	zju swee desolay
I'm sorry <u>or</u> Excuse me	Pardon	par don

## GREETINGS

Good morning /afternoon/hello (to a female)	Bonjour, Madame	bon zjoor ma dam
Good morning /afternoon/hello (to a male)	Bonjour, Monsieur	bon zjoor mu syuh
Good evening /hello	Bonsoir	bon swahr
Good night	Bonne nuit	bon nwee

Note: 'Madame' and 'Monsieur' are the usual forms of address in France. The plurals are 'Mesdames' ( may dam) and 'Messieurs' ( may syuh)

## QUESTIONS

Questions are usually prefaced with: Est-ce-que (ess-ke). Sometimes the question is simply indicated by an upward inflection of the voice. Here are some questions you may be asked

Are you in pain? Are you feeling rough?	Est-ce-que vous avez mal? <b>Or</b> Vous avez mal?	ess ke vooz away mal? <b>Or</b> Vooz away mal?
Have you washed, cleaned your teeth and combed your hair?	Est-ce-que vous avez fait votre toilette? <b>Or</b> vous avez fait votre toilette ?	ess ke vooz away fay la twalette <b>or</b> Vooz away fay la twalette?
Would you like to....	Est-ce-que vous voulez....	ass-ke voo voolay....

## FEELINGS

How are you?	Comment allez-vous ?	Komon tallay voo
	Comment vous sentez - vous?	Komon vous sontay voo
I feel much better	Je me <b>sens</b> beaucoup mieux	zju me son bocoo myugh
I feel worse	Ça va moins bien	Sa va mwoin byan
I feel worse than ever	Je n'ai jamais été aussi mal	zju nay jamay etay osee mal
I feel low	Je me <b>sens</b> déprimé	zju me son daypreemay
I am low / depressed	je <b>suis</b> démoralisé / déprimé	zju swee daymoralisay / daypreemay

The verbs used here are **sentir** - to feel and **être**- to be

## ON ARRIVAL AT THE HOSPITAL

You will be asked if you are '*pris(e) en charge*' This means whether you are covered under the French Health Service, or if you have an EHIC card from the UK. You will also be asked if you have a '*mutuelle*' or '*complémentaire*'. These refer to private health insurance or French top-up insurance. This informs the staff of where to send the various bills for your treatment.

You will be asked for / about several things:

Blood group	Quel est votre groupe sanguin ?	kel ay votruh groep san gween
Medical / surgical history	antécédents médicaux / chirurgicaux	antaycaydon medico /sheeroogico
Allergies	avez-vous des allergies <i>or</i> êtes-vous allergique?	away-voo days allergees <b>or</b> et voos allergeek
Current Medication	Quel est votre traitement actuel / courant / en cours?	kel ay votre traytemon aktoel / kooron/ on koor?
Special diet	Avez-vous un régime spécial?	away voo un raygeem spaysial
Without salt	Sans sel	son sel
Without sugar	Sans sucre	son sookre
Gluten free	Sans gluten	son glooten
You may be told not to get up	Ne pas se lever <b>or</b> restez allongé	ne pa se levay <b>or</b> restay allongay
You may be asked to get undressed	Déshabillez vous <b>or</b> ôtez-vous	daysabeeyay voo <b>or</b> otay voo
The nurse may want to take your blood pressure	Contrôler votre tension	kontrolay votruh tonseon

You might need a wee	Je veux faire pipi	zju ve fair peepee
You may be told you need an operation	Intervention chirurgicale <b>or</b> opération	intervonseon sheeroorgical <b>or</b> operaseeon

## BLOOD & BLOOD TESTS

Have you got your blood group card?	Est-ce que vous avez votre carte de votre groupe sanguine?	Es se ke vooz away votre cart de votre group san gween?
blood	Le sang	le song
Blood pressure	La tension	la ton si on
A blood test	Une analyse de sang	oon ana lees de song
A blood transfusion	Une transfusion sanguine	oon transfus i on san gween
Blood Group	Le (Mon) group sanguine	group san gween

## THINGS YOU MAY BE ASKED TO DO

Swallow	Avalez!	a val ay!
Breathe in and hold your breath	Inspirez et bloquez la respiration	An speeray ay blokay la res pee rass ion
Don't breathe (e.g when you are having an exray)	Ne respirez pas!	Ne res peer ay pa
You can breathe now	Respirez !	res peer ay
Lie down flat (on your back)	Allongez-vous!	al on jay-voo
Lie on your stomach	Allongez-vous sur le ventre	al on-jay voo syour le vontre
Turn over	Tournez!	tor nay!

## SOME THINGS YOU MAY NEED TO SAY

I'm very tired	Je suis très fatiguée	zju swee tray fatee gay
I've got diarrhoea	J'ai la diarrhée	zjay la dee ar ay
I'm hungry	J'ai faim	zjay fam
I'm thirsty	J'ai soif	zjay swaf
I need another toilet roll please	Voudriez vous me donner un nouveau rouleau de papier hygiénique, s'il vous plaît?	voodree ay voo me donnay un noo vo rool o de papeay eejeneek, seal voo play?

## EXPLAINING YOUR PAIN

*It is quite difficult to tell French doctors and nurses what your pain is like. In English we have a wealth of adjectives to describe levels of pain. Basic French normally teaches us two phrases: J'ai mal à or j'ai une douleur à.... Here are a few phrases and adjectives which might help you give a more accurate description of what that ache really feels like!*

Acute / sharp pain	Une douleur aiguë	oon doolur ay gu ay
Shooting pain	Un élanement	un ay lans e mon
Burning pain	Une sensation de brûlure	oon son sassion de broolur
Throbbing pain	Une douleur lancinante	oon doolur lahn se nahnt
Discomfort, as in sore	Une gêne	oon zjen
Painful as in causing pain or misery	douloureux	doo le ruh
Agonizing pain	Une douleur atroce	oon doolur atross
Abominable pain	Une douleur abominable	oon doolur a bom ee nahble
Uncomfortable as in providing discomfort	Inconfortable <b>ou</b> je ne me sens pas bien	un con for tahbluh <b>or</b> zje ne me son pah byan
Ache	Une douleur <b>ou</b> avoir mal	oon doolur <b>or</b> avwah mal
Stomach ache	mal au ventre <b>ou</b> mal à l'estomac <b>ou</b> douleur stomacale	mal o vontre or mal a ledtomak or doolur stomakal
Bone pain	Une douleur osseuse	oon doolur oss ers
I have a pain in my back / stomach	J'ai une douleur dans le dos / ventre	zjay oon doolur don le doh / vontr
I have a headache	J'ai mal à la tête	zjay mal a la tet

## MEETING YOUR DOCTOR OR CONSULTANT

*Suppose your consultant asks you how you are. He will probably say: 'Comment ça va ce matin? If you tell him/her that you are hurting, you will be asked to explain where it hurts. The usual phrase is, "Montrez moi à quel endroit"*

*Here are some possible responses. Notice how you must use parts of the body to explain where it hurts. Remember to make masculine and feminine words agree with the article: a with feminine words; au with masculine words and aux in the plural.*

How are you this morning?	Comment ça va ce matin ?	kom on sa va se matan
I have a severe pain	J'ai une douleur aiguë	zjay oon doolur aygyooay
Show me where	Montrez moi à quel endroit	montray mwoi a kel on drwoi
My head	à la tête	a la tet
My leg	à la jambe	a la jomb
in my chest / knees	dans la poitrine / les genoux	don la pwoitreen / lay jeno

*Of course the pain may have occurred during the night, or previously. You will need to use the past tense:*

I had a severe pain...	J'ai eu une douleur aiguë	Jay uh oone doo-leur ay-gooay
I had throbbing pains in my stomach in the night	J'ai eu des élancements dans la poitrine cette nuit	Zjay days ay lance eh mon Don la pwoi treen set nwee
I had throbbing pains in my stomach in the early hours	dans la poitrine du bonne heure	Zjay days ay lance eh mon Don la pwoi treen doo bon ur

*You might want to explain that the pain is not very great, but it is getting on your nerves. In which case try this phrase:*

It is an irritating pain, and is getting on my nerves	C'est une douleur agaçante	Set oon doo leur a-ga-sahnt
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*On the other hand you may be suffering quite a lot:*

A sharp shooting pain	C'est une douleur brutale	Set oon doo leur bru-tahl
It is a very strong pain, I am suffering	C'est une souffrance très forte	Set oon soo-frahnce tray fort
It is a continuous pain and I am suffering	C'est une souffrance constante	Set oon soo-frahnce constant

## **EFFECTS OF CHEMOTHERAPY**

*If you are being treated with 'Chemo' you may be feeling sick. Here are some phrases:*

I had a burning sensation in my stomach/ gullet	J'ai eu une sensation de brûlure à l'estomac/à l'oesophage	Zjay uh oon son sa see on de Broo leur a lesstomak / a lossfaj
I feel sick	J'ai envie de vomir	jay on-vee de vomih
I felt sick	J'ai eu envie de vomir	jay uh on-vee de vomih
I feel sick all the time	J'ai tout le temps envie de vomir	jay too le tohn on-vee de vomih
I was sick during the night	Pendant la nuit, j'ai vomi	Pon-don la nwee, jay vohmee

## EFFECTS OF RADIOTHERAPY

Radiotherapy can have some other consequences:

My skin feels tight	Je sens que ma peau me tire	Je son kuh ma poh muh teer
My skin is prickling	Ma peau me picote	Ma poh muh pikot
Lying or sitting still can cause numbness;		
My whole arm feels numb	Je sens que mon bras est ankylosé	Je son kuh mon bra ay on-key-losay

When a numb limb comes back to life, it tingles.

My arm is tingling	J'ai des fourmillements dans mon bras	Jay day for-mee-mon don mon bra
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## CALLING THE EMERGENCY SERVICES



*So you need SAMU what do you do? The easy bit is dialling '15'. They need to know where to find you. Here we look at giving them directions. To apply this lesson, locate a landmark near you. Draw a sketch map showing the road from the landmark to your house, and then practice giving directions! Have it written out by your phone so that you can help them help you!*

**Some possible land marks:**

castle/stately home	Le château	le shato
pond	l'étang(m)	laytang
church	l'église (f)	laygeez
bar (note it's name if it has one)	le bar	le bahr

**Directions:**

Go straight ahead	Allez tout droit / Continuez	allay to drwoi
turn right	Tournez à droite	toornay a drwoi
turn left	Tournez à gauche	toornay a gohsh
take the 1st turning on your left	Prenez la première rue à gauche	prenay la prem ee air roo a gohsh
take the 2nd turning on your right	Prenez la deuxième rue à droite	prenay la duh zee em roo a drwoit
Go up the street	Montez la rue	montay la roo

Go down the avenue	Descendez l'avenue	de sonday lav e noo
Cross the square	Traversez la place	tra verse ay la plass

**You can say:**

You turn	Vous tournez .....	voo toornay
Turn	or Tournez	toornay
You go straight on	Vous allez tout droit	voos allay too drwoi
Go straight on	Allez tout droit	allay too drwoit

**Position of House**

in front of	devant	de von
opposite	en face de	on fass de
the house is on the right	La maison est sur la droite	la mayson ay soor la drwoit
the house is on the left	La maison est sur la gauche	la mayson ay soor la gohche
the house is opposite the pond	La maison est en face de l'étang	la mayson ayt on fass de laytang

*It can be quite difficult for the emergency services to find you especially if you live in a hamlet at an address with no road name or number. If there's a nearby easy landmark (eg a central crossroad in the middle of the hamlet, a church or a post office) maybe someone could meet the emergency services there and guide them in.*



*Remember too, neighbours are usually only too willing to help in an emergency. Even if you don't really know them, you could knock and ask them for help:*

Excuse me, I need help	Excusez-moi, mais j'ai besoin d'aide	ex scoos eh mwoi, zjay beswain daid
My wife/husband is ill, and I need to call	Ma femme/mon mari est malade, et il faut appeler le SAMU	ma fam / marri ay ma lad, ay il foh apple ay le sammoo
I don't speak much French	Je ne parle pas beaucoup le français	zje ne parl par bocoo le francay
Can you help me, please?	Est-ce que vous pouvez m'aidez, s'il vous plait?	es ke voo poovay mayday seel voo play

