

# Idioms from Medicine



## Reading

Read the story. Then discuss the questions.

### A Lot of Nerve

I like birds. They're beautiful when they fly. Many of them have lovely colors. But I was **sick and tired** of that pigeon. It caused too much trouble.

It really **had a lot of nerve**. Every morning it came to my backyard and ate all the baby lettuces one by one. It was very careful to eat the best. It **took great pains** to do so. And so I decided to stop its mischief. I wanted to give the bird **a taste of its own medicine**.

I built the ugliest-looking scarecrow you ever saw. I dressed it in old clothes and put it in the yard. Would it work? I really wasn't sure. I **felt it in my bones** that the bird might know it was a trick.

The next day I decided to see what was happening. I paused for a moment, **held my breath**, and looked out the window. There in the middle of the yard was the pigeon pulling out straws from the hat on my scarecrow. And I could see that more lettuce had been eaten. Clearly, I had to think of a new plan.

1. When you're **sick and tired** of something, how do you feel about the thing? What things are you sick and tired of doing?
2. If you **have a lot of nerve**, are you shy?
3. When you **take great pains** to do something, how do you do it? What do you take great pains about doing?

## Meanings

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Each example has an idiom from medicine. Read the example carefully to find the meaning of the idiom. Then look at the definitions that follow the examples. Write the idiom next to its definition.

**blood is thicker than water**

Anna gave her son the job instead of advertising the position. You know, **blood is thicker than water**.

**a bitter pill to swallow**

When Bob lost his job after working with the same company for ten years, it was a **bitter pill to swallow**.

**to cough up**

**Cough up** the rent or leave the apartment.

**to feel it in one's bones**

Our team's going to win the game. I can **feel it in my bones**.

**a fly in the ointment**

We want to buy a house, but there's just **one fly in the ointment**. We don't have enough money for a down payment.

**to get burned**

If you invest a lot of money in the stock market, you may **get burned** and lose your money.

**to give someone a taste of his/her own medicine**

If Lena keeps on shouting at people and getting angry, someone will **give her a taste of her own medicine** and shout back at her.

**to have a lot of nerve**

Elmer **has a lot of nerve**. He got a pay raise three months ago. Now he's asking for another one.

**to hold one's breath**

If you're angry, **hold your breath** and count to ten. After that, you'll feel calmer.

**sick and tired**

I am **sick and tired** of doing all the housework myself. I need some help.

**to take pains**

If you **take pains** to do something well, it will often be a success. And you won't have to take time to do it over, because it will be right the first time.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ very annoyed, very tired of doing something

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|--------------------|---|
| 2. _____<br>_____  | relatives are the most important people   |
| 3. _____<br>_____  | to act so badly and impolitely that it actually takes courage to do so            |
| 4. _____<br>_____  | to take a lot of trouble to do something  |
| 5. _____<br>_____  | to do something bad to someone after the other person has done the same bad thing |
| 6. _____<br>_____  | to know something, often before seeing it or before it happens                    |
| 7. _____<br>_____  | to pause, to stop and think   |
| 8. _____<br>_____  | something difficult and unpleasant to experience                                  |
| 9. _____<br>_____  | to pay money  |
| 10. _____<br>_____ | to have a bad experience, to be cheated   |
| 11. _____<br>_____ | a problem   |

## Practice

A. Answer each question with **yes** or **no**. Explain your answer.

1. Jill always does things fast and makes mistakes. Does she take pains with her work?
2. My grandfather always knows when trouble is coming. Can he feel it in his bones?
3. Beth put sugar in my soup. If I put some in hers, will she get a taste of her own medicine?
4. Ernie watches television seven hours each day. Is he sick and tired of television?
5. After training hard, Sheree came in last in her race. Was this a bitter pill to swallow?
6. Carol never pays her bills. Does she cough up easily?
7. Carol didn't pay me back when I lent her money. Does that mean I got burned?
8. We were able to get tickets to the big game, but they were in the last row and we couldn't see very well. Was there a fly in the ointment somewhere?



9. That person walked right to the head of the line, before the rest of us who were waiting. Did he have a lot of nerve?
10. If you're making a lot of mistakes, is it a good idea to stop and hold your breath before continuing?
11. The doctor gave the job of receptionist to his niece. Does this show that blood is thicker than water?

B. Complete each example with an idiom from this unit.

1. I hurried to get to the game on time, but there was a \_\_\_\_\_ . The game was on Tuesday, not Monday.
2. You \_\_\_\_\_ to take my English book without telling me.
3. Enrique always \_\_\_\_\_ to make sure that he does his assignments on time.
4. It's going to rain. I \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ of getting junk mail every day.
6. You know \_\_\_\_\_ when it comes to choosing someone for a job.
7. Basil always played tricks on Victoria. Then, one day, Victoria played a trick on Basil. He \_\_\_\_\_ .
8. I didn't get the job because I was overqualified and had too much experience. It was a \_\_\_\_\_ .

9. You've been trying to figure out the answers to these questions for the last two hours. Why not stop and \_\_\_\_\_ and then try again?
10. Never buy a car with lots of miles on it without a guarantee. Otherwise, you'll probably \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Whenever we collect money in class for a party or anything else, there are some students who don't \_\_\_\_\_.

## Conversation

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Practice each conversation with a partner.

### SITUATION 1

Two friends are talking about Eve.

SUE-ELLEN: Did you hear about Eve's car?

JOLYNNE: You mean the one that stopped in the middle of the highway?

SUE-ELLEN: Yes. She really got burned when she bought it cheap.

### SITUATION 2

The conversation continues. The friends are getting ready to go to school.

JOLYNNE: Sue-Ellen, stop rushing around. You're only wasting time.

SUE-ELLEN: But I can't remember what I need to take with me.

JOLYNNE: Calm down. Hold your breath, count to ten, and try to remember again.

### SITUATION 3

The conversation continues. The friends are on their way to school.

SUE-ELLEN: I'm not going to do well on the test.

JOLYNNE: How do you know?

SUE-ELLEN: I don't. I just feel it in my bones.

### On Your Own

Work with a partner. Choose three idioms. Write a short conversation for each idiom. Then act out your conversations.

## Discussion

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Work with a partner or in a small group. Do the following activities.

1. Look over the idioms in this unit. Which words relate to medicine? Can you tell the meanings of those words?
2. The idioms in this unit all use words from medicine. Do you know any other English idioms that use words from medicine?
3. Are there medicine idioms in your native language? Are any idioms like the ones in English?
4. Describe a situation where you or someone you know **got burned**.