



ESL Podcast 379 – A Routine Medical Procedure

GLOSSARY

surgery – medical operation that involves the taking out or replacement of a body part

* Zunny fell off her bike and hit her head. Now she must have brain surgery.

routine procedure – a normal or common surgery; an operation that is often done and not considered highly dangerous

* Even though it was a routine procedure, Ekaterina was still afraid to have a tooth pulled.

to be admitted overnight – to stay in the hospital overnight for observation; to sleep one night in a hospital so that doctors and nurses can watch the patient

* I can't imagine sleeping in a hospital. I hope they don't want to admit me overnight!

general anesthesia – loss of feeling in the whole body due to a drug given by the doctor; a drug used during a surgery so that the patient is not awake and does not feel pain

* During a major operation like heart surgery, the doctor will use general anesthesia.

local anesthesia – loss of feeling in only the small part of the body on which the surgery is being performed due to a drug given by the doctor; a drug used on patients on the part of the body where the doctor will operate

* Will they just use local anesthesia on your throat when you have your tonsils removed?

out-patient procedure – surgery in which the patient can leave the same day; not being admitted overnight

* I must go to the hospital this afternoon, but it's an out-patient procedure so you can visit me at home later.

to keep under observation – to keep a person at the hospital so the doctors can watch or monitor their health

* He was still very sick, even after they gave him medicine, so the doctors decided to keep him under observation for a few more days.

all the same – even so; still; nevertheless

* I like Luis, but all the same, I wish he wasn't dating my little sister.



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complications – problems; things that can go wrong

* There were so many complications with the birth that the doctors are surprised that the baby survived.

low-risk – not dangerous; little chance of being hurt; relatively safe

* This business plan is very low risk and we will almost certainly double our money.

post-op – after the operation; after the surgery has been completed

* Please read the piece of paper the doctor gave you about post-op care so that you will heal from your surgery quickly.

to release – to let go; to set free; to allow someone to leave

* When will they release your father from the hospital?

to free up beds – to send home current patients to make space for new patients

* To free up beds, the nurses sent home all of the patients who no longer needed care.

impaired – hurt; ruined; not at its best; harmed; made worse

* My eyesight was impaired for a week after Ken hit me in the face.

judgment – the ability to make decisions; common sense; opinion

* I've known Laura a long time and I think she has poor judgment when it comes to men.

discharged – set free; released; allowed to leave

* I didn't know that Carrie had been discharged from the hospital until I saw her at the grocery store yesterday.

I told you so – phrase used to say, "I told you this would happen"; a phrase to show that one was right about what one said would happen

* I told my father to watch for thieves on the bus, and when his wallet was stolen, I could only say, "I told you so."



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why isn't Sergey nervous about his surgery?
 - a) He is good friends with the doctor.
 - b) It is a routine procedure.
 - c) It is an expensive surgery.

 2. What does it mean to be "admitted overnight"?
 - a) To sleep in the hospital.
 - b) To have doctors visit you in your home.
 - c) To tell someone where you slept the previous night.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

release

In this podcast, the word "release" means to allow a person to leave from a place: "They release the students from school fifteen minutes early on Fridays." A person can also be released from an agreement or a contract: "James was released from his contract even though he still had three years left on his agreement." A piece of printed news or information like a book, magazine, or CD can also be released, which means to be made available to the public: "I am excited about my favorite band's new CD, which will be released in March!" Release can mean a feeling of relief or freedom: "Anja was finally released from years of unhappiness when she divorced her husband." A "press release" is an announcement made by a person, business, or organization that makes information about an event available to newspapers and TV stations: "My company sent a press release to the newspaper about the new business deal."

judgment

The word, "judgment" in this podcast means common sense or wisdom: "Use your judgment when making business decisions, or you could lose all of your money." Judgment can also be a way of thinking or an opinion: "As you can tell by his collection of paintings, modern art, in Jon's judgment, is the future." A judgment can also be a ruling or decision in a trial: "The judgment said he was guilty, and now he must go to jail." "To pass judgment" is to form a usually unfair opinion about someone or something: "Julio was always passing judgment on the homeless people outside his building." A "judgment call" is a decision based on a person's best judgment or common sense: "I thought Tristan's decision to go skydiving was a bad judgment call."



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CULTURE NOTE

While surgery is never good news, understanding the different types of surgery may take the “mystery” (unknown) out of what the doctor plans to do. You certainly don’t have to be a doctor to understand the differences between elective, emergency, exploratory, reconstructive, and transplant surgeries.

An elective surgery is a surgery a person has made the decision to have. It is a “medical procedure” (another word for surgery) done to correct or fix a medical problem that is not “life-threatening” (very serious). Why would anyone choose to “undergo” (go through; have) surgery? There are many reasons, but perhaps the most common is to “enhance” (make better; improve) a person’s “physical appearance” (the way a person looks). This type of elective surgery is called “cosmetic” (beauty; surface) surgery. Surgeries that are not elective are called emergency surgeries. The word “emergency” refers to something that needs to be fixed immediately, so an emergency surgery is a surgery that must be performed right away or the person risks their health and even death. An example of an emergency surgery is a “heart bypass” (surgery to help blood get to the heart) after a “heart attack” (when blood can’t get to the heart).

The words “emergency” and “elective” refer to the “circumstance” (situation, including time and place) under which a surgery will happen, but there are also words that refer to the actual medical procedure. “Reconstructive surgery” is similar to cosmetic surgery in that it changes a person’s physical appearance; however reconstructive surgery is not done “solely” (only) for cosmetic reasons. If a child has been burned, his or her parents may decide that the child should undergo reconstructive surgery to “minimize” (make less noticeable) the appearance of burns. Another type of surgery is a transplant. A “transplant” is a surgery in which a doctor removes a body part or internal organ that no longer “functions” (works) and replaces it with a working part. Many organs, including kidneys, hearts, and even eyes, can be transplanted. A third type, “exploratory surgery,” is a procedure in which doctors use tools, sometimes including cameras, to look inside a person’s body and “make a diagnosis” (discover the cause of a medical problem).

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – a



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 379: A Routine Medical Procedure.

This is ESL Podcast episode 379. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

We have a website. Oh yes, we do! You can visit it at eslpod.com and download a Learning Guide for this episode, which contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, comprehension questions, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode. If you're looking for a way to improve your English even faster, take a look at our Learning Guide on the website.

This episode is called "A Routine Medical Procedure." Something that is "routine" means it is common; it is not complicated or particularly difficult, something you do all the time. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Julia: Aren't you nervous about your surgery next week?

Hugh: No, it's a routine procedure. I don't even need to be admitted overnight.

Julia: But aren't you going under general anesthesia? It's not the same as local anesthesia, you know.

Hugh: Yes, I know. This is an out-patient procedure. If the doctors don't think I can go home the same day, they'll just keep me under observation.

Julia: All the same, there may be complications.

Hugh: It's supposed to be a low-risk procedure. If there are post-op problems, I'm sure the doctors will take good care of me.

Julia: But what if they release you too early from the hospital. I've heard that these days doctors are under pressure to free up beds as soon as possible.



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Hugh: It's true that I may be impaired after the procedure, but my daughter will be there and I trust her judgment. I'm sure she'll make sure I'm fine to go home before I'm discharged.

Julia: But what if...?

Hugh: Don't worry. Nothing bad is going to happen. If it does, you can say, "I told you so."

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Julia asking Hugh, "Aren't you nervous about your surgery next week?" "Surgery" is a medical operation that usually involves taking out or somehow fixing a part of your body. Often it involves cutting through your skin to get to that part. You can have heart surgery, you can have kidney surgery; these are all kinds of surgery.

Hugh says to Julia, "No, it's a routine procedure," meaning it's a normal or common medical operation; it's not very dangerous. He says, "I don't even need to be admitted overnight." "To be admitted," here, means to be admitted to the hospital, meaning you will stay at the hospital for at least 24 hours. "Overnight" means through the night, so from one night to the following day.

But, Hugh says he doesn't need to be admitted; it's not a serious procedure. Julia asks, "But aren't you going under general anesthesia?" "Anesthesia" is when you are given certain drugs to make you very sleepy and, eventually, to sort of "lose consciousness," you don't know what's going on. This is what we give patients who are having surgery; we don't want them to feel the pain so we give them drugs so they basically are sleeping. That's general anesthesia. That's a tough word to say even for native speakers: "anesthesia." Julia adds, "It's not the same as local anesthesia, you know." "Local anesthesia" is when you only have a small part or section of your body where you can't feel anything. So, the drug only affects, for example, your arm or your leg; in one part of your body, you're not asleep.

Hugh says, "Yes, I know. This is an out-patient procedure." When we say someone is an "out-patient," we mean they go to the hospital or the clinic, but they don't stay there overnight. "Out-patient procedures" are medical surgeries and operations that you go in in the morning and you go home in the afternoon; you don't stay the whole 24 hours or more. Hugh says, "If the doctors don't think I can go home the same day, they'll just keep me under observation." The expression "to keep someone under observation" is one that you will hear in a



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hospital. It means that we keep the person at the hospital so the doctors can watch, or “monitor,” their health. That’s keeping someone under observation.

Julia responds to Hugh by saying, “All the same, there may be complications.” “All the same” is an expression that means nevertheless, or even so; taking into consideration what you said, however there is still this additional problem or situation. In this case, Julia is saying that there still could be complications from this routine procedure. “Complications” are problems, things that could go wrong.

Hugh responds, “It’s supposed to be a low-risk procedure.” “Risk” is similar to danger, so a “low-risk procedure” is not dangerous. The opposite be a “high-risk procedure.” Hugh says, “If there are post-op problems, I’m sure the doctors will take good care of me.” “Post” means after; “op” means operation, in this case. So, “post-op” is after the operation, after the surgery has been completed.

Julia is still worried, she says, “But what if they release you too early from the hospital. I’ve heard that these days doctors are under pressure to free up beds as soon as possible.” The verb “to release” means to let go, to allow someone to leave. In this case, the hospital is saying to the patient you must go home now; you can’t stay in the hospital anymore. We also use this verb when we let prisoners out of jail or prison: they are released.

Julia is worried that the hospital will release him before he is completely “recovered,” before he is healthy again. The reason she thinks this is because she’s heard from other people “that these days (meaning nowadays; in the current time) doctors are under pressure (or are being forced to) free up beds as soon as possible.” “To free up something” means to make them unoccupied. “To free up a bed” would mean to send patients home so that they have a bed for a new patient to come in. We also use this expression with time: “I need to free up some time,” meaning I need to cancel, move, or reschedule things on my calendar so I have time to do certain things. I never have to do this; I never have anything to do!

Julia is worried, then, that the hospital will release Hugh too early because they want to free up his bed for another paying patient. Hugh says, “It’s true that I may be impaired after the procedure, but my daughter will be there and I trust her judgment.” “To be impaired” (impaired) means to be not at your best. To be hurt, to be harmed; that is impaired. “My eyesight was impaired,” means I couldn’t see very well. Hugh is saying that he may be impaired mentally when he finishes the procedure, but his daughter will be there and he trusts her judgment. “Judgment,” here, means the ability to make decisions; “common sense,” we



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might say. “Judgment” has a couple of different meanings in English, as does the verb “to release.” Take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations about both of these terms.

Hugh says, “I’m sure (I’m confident that my daughter will) make sure I’m fine.” “To make sure” means to investigate, to act in a way that guarantees something will happen, to make a situation happen the way you want it to happen. He says his daughter will make sure he’s fine – he’s okay – to go home before he’s discharged. “To be discharged” is the same as to be released from a hospital, in this case.

Then Julia asks, “But what if...?” And Hugh interrupts her and says, “Don’t worry. Nothing is going to happen. If it does, you can say, ‘I told you so.’” “I told you so” is an expression that means I told you that this would happen. Usually it’s a phrase to show that you are right about something that you said, often with someone who may have disagreed with you. So for example, the Los Angeles Dodgers are playing a baseball game against the San Francisco Giants – who everybody hates, unless you’re in San Francisco! People say that about Los Angeles, too. Anyway, they’re playing the Giants, and you have a bet with a friend of yours from San Francisco and you say, “I bet the Dodgers win.” Then, the two teams play the game, of course the Dodgers will win – the Los Angeles team will win the game – and you say to your friend, “I told you so,” after the game – I told you that they would win.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Hugh: Yes, I know. This is an out-patient procedure. If the doctors don’t think I can go home the same day, they’ll just keep me under observation.

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Julia: But what if they release you too early from the hospital. I've heard that these days doctors are under pressure to free up beds as soon as possible.

Hugh: It's true that I may be impaired after the procedure, but my daughter will be there and I trust her judgment. I'm sure she'll make sure I'm fine to go home before I'm discharged.

Julia: But what if...?

Hugh: Don't worry. Nothing bad is going to happen. If it does, you can say, "I told you so."

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by a woman of excellent judgment, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. We'll see you next time, or you'll hear us next time, on ESL Podcast.

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