

Example of GPs script:

Patient contribution

Okay, and I asked you to come back again, didn't I?

Yeah, okay. So, this was all about your headache, wasn't it?

Okay. Was there anything else apart from the pain in your head that we needed to tackle today?

ICE

Right. Well, thanks for coming back, and I think it's quite helpful just to revisit what we were thinking last week – one of my fears was that you might have inflammation of one of the blood vessels in your scalp there. (Doctor's concern)

And that could be linked with a risk of going blind; so, a problem that we call temporal arteritis.

But if you're worried about dementia.....

And do you think that the cough is related to when you're getting heartburn?

PSO

Can I double check – you don't smoke, you're not a big drinker?

And you live with your husband?

Anything else I need to know about you, activities-wise?

Hobbies?

Exercise at all?

Are you getting on okay with your husband?

Red flags

Good control of your bladder?

Normal feeling around your backside? No weakness, no numbness anywhere, that you've noticed?

You're not coming to blows?

You're not addicted to it? (Codeine linctus) Sure?

Focussed history

But you don't have any muscle pain at all?

Not predominantly?

No. Because I felt your muscles last time and they seemed okay.

Okay, and when does that come on?

No swollen joint?

And how are you in yourself?

Give me a score out of ten for that pain in your head.

So, we'll have a think about that as well. But you have been taking three of the prednisolone a day, since I saw you last time?

Just going back to that issue you had with that cough as well...

And do you think that the cough is related to when you're getting heartburn?

You mentioned that you're prone to congestion in your nose, and we looked up your nose before, and there's no nose polyps.

Focussed examination

And you mentioned the possibility of sciatica, but if I straighten your leg there and lift it, there's no pressure on your sciatic nerves – so that seems to be okay at the moment.

Your muscles aren't sore when I'm pressing on there? That's lovely. They're not sore there at all, and when I just gently brush your scalp, that's not sore at all when I'm doing that?

And the same on the other side?

Your story's an interesting one, okay. You're not particularly tender when I'm brushing against that?

But if you're worried about dementia, then I can perhaps do a couple of screening tests to check that that's not an issue?

Your mood's okay?

Identify problem and explain diagnosis

And that could be linked with a risk of going blind; so, a problem that we call temporal arteritis. So, I was trying to rule that one out, with doing tests and also giving you some treatment.

So, I was trying to rule that one out, with doing tests and also giving you some treatment.

So, that's reassuring. Your blood test was reassuring, too.

There's nothing that's suggesting that, okay? (Regarding a fear of cancer or dementia.)

But if you're worried about dementia, then I can perhaps do a couple of screening tests to check that that's not an issue?

Check understanding

Any questions?

Develops management plan / shares management plan

The last thing I want to do is to cause harm with any medication that I'm using, so I'm going to suggest at the moment that we suspend the prednisolone, and you don't use anything for it, for the moment.

The risks of this going on to produce blindness are remote in the extreme, bearing in mind that there's not very much to find on you today.

Alright, well, one thing that you could do if you wanted, to help you with that nasal congestion and also that tickly cough, would be a steroid – and that would be a much more healthy direction to take than swigging the codeine regularly.

That's where you have more symptoms, and that'll tend to be when you're getting a post-nasal drip, so you're getting a bit of gunge coming down the back there.

Some people prefer to use a steroid spray, and that can help. Some people that get gunge coming down the back of their nose find that washing it out with saline works.

Is that something that you would be interested in doing?

Try and keep a lid on this codeine thing that you've got going on.

So, I'll give you the instructions about how to make up the saline; you're probably also going to have to get a little squeegee bottle or a little neti pot.

You can buy those on the internet, and sometimes the chemist stock them as well.

It's a bit like a watering can – what you're basically doing is flushing out your nostril.

So this is the recipe. It includes a bit of salt, and it includes a little bit of bicarbonate of soda as well. There's the recipe for you, all right.

And that can often make quite a substantial difference if it's gunge that's coming back, but if it's general congestion and no gunge; then a steroid might be the way to go, so let me know if you want to give that a go as well.

So we're going to stop the prednisolone.

Safety net and follow up

But if it's continuing to be a problem, I'd like you to come back and see me again.

Particularly if it's sore and throbbing all the time.

But there's always a room for things changing, so why don't we just keep an eye on you. So, if you're getting throbbing that's there all day, let's see you urgently. If it's coming and going and it's worse than it has been, then we'll give you another opinion. The blood test was reassuring.

You're going to come back and see me again urgently if you're getting throbbing there all day, and it's very tender - but otherwise, I think we can be quite reassured that you've got no major problems with your blood vessels there at all.

Okay. So, give this a go for a couple of months, it'll often help you have less gunge, but it will - immediately after doing it, you'll find that your nose drips.

So, if it's a runny nose that's predominately the problem, then we can turn off the tap with a spray, or it's congestion that's the problem we can use steroid nasal spray - but, if it's gunge, then the saline's the way to go in the first instance.

So, let me know which way you want to go next. Give it a couple of months.