

Expression of common complaints in Honduras
(Quejas Típicas de Pacientes en Clínicas Rurales)

-Wayne Hale

During medical mission trips to Honduras and in our Hispanic clinic, I have noticed that medical complaints are often expressed differently compared with phrases as presented in textbooks of medical Spanish. For example, it is much more common for the patient in Honduras to say “me pega dolor” than “tengo dolor” Medical workers traveling to rural Mexico and Central America may find knowledge of this rural terminology useful. Alternative or related words are listed in parentheses. The phrases have been reviewed by Graciela Namihira, MD who practiced in Mexico City before moving to the US and Reyna South who is originally from Honduras. Please give us your comments and reports of other “non-standard” terms used by rural Spanish speakers to describe illnesses.

General	
Desde hace poco tengo	For a short time I have had
ya días	For a while
Me siento embolado (mareos)	I feel drunk (dizzy)
Cuando trabajo me pongo débil.	I feel weak when working.
Tengo mareos (vértigo) desde el Domingo.	I've been dizzy since Sunday.
Estoy sin apetito y he bajado de peso.	I have no appetite and have lost weight.
Estoy feliz como una lombriz	I am as happy as a worm.
Tengo gripe, tos, y calentura (fiebre).	I have flu, cough, and fever.
Tengo tos en la noche que me molesta.	I have cough that bothers me at night
Me pegó malaria (paludismo) la semana pasada.	I had a malaria attack last week.
Tengo desvelo por la noche	I can't sleep (am vigilant) all night
Skin	
Hay masamorros (mesquinos, verugas.)	There are warts
Manchas en el pescuezo (cuello)	Spots on the neck
Tengo ronchitas (comezón, picazón) en la piel.	I have hives (itching, irritation) on my skin.
Tengo manchas (granitos) en los brazos y la cara.	I have spots (pimples) on my arms and face.
Head	
Tengo dolor de cabeza (migraña) (de cerebro).	I have headache (migraine) (pain in back of my head)
Se me cae el pelo (cabello).	My hair is falling out.
Eyes	
Tengo caspa (piojos) en las pestañas.	I have dandruff (lice) in my eyelashes.
Tengo carnosidad y la vista borrosa.	I have a pterygium and blurry vision.
Tengo desecho amarillo en los ojos.	I have yellow discharge from my eyes.
Me arde la vista.	My eyes burn.
Se me hincha el ojo derecho.	My right eye is swollen.
Me lloran (arden) bastante los ojos.	My eyes water (burn) a lot.
Ears	
Me duelen los oídos y sale pus amarillo.	My ears hurt and yellow pus drains from them.
Nose	
Se me tapa la nariz.	My nose is congested.
Se me parte la oreja y me pica.	I have cracking and itching behind my ear.

Mouth	
Me duelen las amígdalas (anginas)	My tonsils hurt.
Me duelen las muelas (los dientes)	My molars (teeth) hurt.
Tengo mal olor de boca aunque me cepille la boca.	I have bad breath even though I brush my mouth.
Chest	
Tos reseca (seca)	Dry cough
Me duele el pecho cuando tueso (toso).	My chest hurts when I cough.
Tengo oprimido el pecho	I feel a weight on my chest
Me hierve el pecho cuando llueve	My chest is congested when it rains.
Breasts	
Bulto en la chiche (pecho, seno)	Lump in the breast (chest, nipple)
No me sale (baja) la leche cuando amamanto	My milk doesn't flow when I breastfeed.
Abdomen	
Barriga llena (llenura) o inflamada	Bloated stomach
Parece que tengo parásitos (bichos, animales)	I seem to have parasites.
Tomé medicina pero no boté	I took medicine but didn't pass worms.
Tengo vómitos (gómitos) y diarrea hace dos días.	I've had vomiting and diarrhea for two days.
Tengo cólicos (retortijones) en la barriga (estómago) (vientre).	I have cramps in my abdomen (upper) (lower).
Me falta el apetito y me pongo bien flaco	I have no appetite and am too thin.
Tengo ácido (ardor) en la boca del estómago.	I have burning in the pit of my stomach.
Me siento una pelota en la panza	
Urogenital	
Me pega picazón (tengo comezón) en mi parte.	I have genital itching
No puedo ensuciar o obrar (mover el intestino)	I can't move my bowels
Tengo mal de orin (ardor al orinar).	I have discomfort (burning) on urination.
Orinar en seguida	Urinate right away
Orinar muy seguido	Urinate frequently
Vaginal	
Tengo desecho verde y con mal olor de vagina.	I have a green smelly vaginal discharge.
Hace dos meses que no me viene la regla.	I haven't had my period for two months.
Tengo secreción (flujo) vaginal.	I have a vaginal discharge
Me pega dolor (calambres) en el vientre cuando tengo la regla (menstruación).	I have lower abdominal pain (cramps) with my period.
Back	
Tengo dolor de la espalda (cintura) (rabadilla).	I have pain in my back (lumbar area) (sacral area).
Extremities	
Me lastimé la canilla (espinilla)	I hurt my shin.
Tengo dolor de las pantorillas y muslos.	I have pain in my calves and thighs.
Me duelen los huesos (coyunturas, articulaciones)	My bones (joints) hurt.
Me duele la pata (pierna).	My leg hurts