Lo Que Dicen
Los Pacientes

What patients say — and how to answer them

525 example exchanges — 7 for every phrase
What they mean, the story behind the words, and a model reply for each
Mexican & Latin American clinic Spanish • English translations included

For clinicians who care for Spanish-speaking patients.
Understand the person first — the phrase is where it starts.

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How to use this workbook

Each entry begins with something a patient actually says — *me tronó la espalda, tengo un aire, ¿me va a tronar el cuello?* — followed by what it literally says and, more importantly, what the patient means by it. The shaded **Roots** box tells the story of the words, so the phrase sticks by understanding rather than memorization. The orange **Responde así** box gives one model reply in Spanish: warm, plain, and within a chiropractor's scope — a question, an explanation, a plan. Model replies never diagnose, never promise an outcome, and never make a treatment claim; they model how to respond, not what to conclude.

Then come **7 short exchanges** per phrase, mixing questions, statements and family members, so you hear each phrase the way it arrives in a real visit. Say the Spanish out loud before reading the English. A note on respect: Chapter 5 covers folk ideas — *aire, empacho, susto, mal de ojo*. These are coherent, centuries-old ways of understanding illness. The goal is never to correct the patient's model, but to understand it, examine carefully, and explain your findings alongside theirs.

Quick reference — all phrases

01	«Me duele aquí»	It hurts me here
02	«Me arde»	It burns me
03	«Me punza»	It stabs/pricks me
04	«Siento como agujas»	I feel like needles
05	«Tengo hormigueo»	I have ant-ing
06	«Me duele al respirar»	It hurts me when breathing
07	«Es un dolor sordo»	It is a deaf pain
08	«Me dan calambres»	Cramps give themselves to me
09	«Siento como una descarga eléctrica»	I feel like an electric shock/discharge
10	«El dolor se me va para la pierna»	The pain goes itself to the leg for me
11	«Me duele más en la noche»	It hurts me more at night
12	«No aguanto el dolor»	I can't hold/endure the pain
13	«Es un dolor que va y viene»	It is a pain that goes and comes
14	«Me tronó la espalda»	My back thundered/cracked on me
15	«Ando todo contracturado»	I go around all contracted
16	«Tengo una bola aquí»	I have a ball here
17	«Se me subió el dolor»	The pain climbed up on me
18	«Se me durmió el brazo»	My arm fell asleep on me
19	«Tengo el cuello tieso»	I have the neck stiff
20	«No puedo agacharme»	I can't bend myself down
21	«Me quedé trabado»	I stayed locked/jammed
22	«Siento la espalda pesada»	I feel the back heavy
23	«Me cruje todo»	Everything creaks on me
24	«Siento un nervio apretado»	I feel a squeezed nerve
26	«Ando chueco»	I walk crooked
25	«Me duele la cintura»	My waist hurts me
27	«Me caí»	I fell myself
28	«Me torcí el tobillo»	I twisted my ankle on myself
29	«Me pegué en la cabeza»	I hit myself on the head
30	«Cargué algo pesado»	I carried something heavy
31	«Me resbalé»	I slipped myself
32	«Me lastimé trabajando»	I injured myself working
33	«Me corté»	I cut myself
34	«Me quemé»	I burned myself
35	«Se me dobló la rodilla»	My knee folded itself on me
36	«Me cayó algo encima»	Something fell on top of me
37	«Tuve un accidente en el carro»	I had an accident in the car
38	«Me jalé un músculo»	I pulled a muscle on myself
39	«Ando mareado»	I go around dizzy/seasick
40	«Me falta el aire»	The air is lacking to me
41	«Me siento débil»	I feel myself weak
42	«No dormí nada»	I didn't sleep nothing
43	«Ando con náuseas»	I go around with nauseas
44	«Me duele todo el cuerpo»	My whole body hurts me
45	«Tengo fiebre»	I have fever
46	«Ando estreñido»	I go around constipated/tightened
47	«Me siento inflamado»	I feel myself inflamed
48	«Se me hinchan los pies»	My feet swell themselves on me
49	«Me dan muchos dolores de cabeza»	Many head-pains give themselves to me
50	«Ando sin energía»	I go around without energy

51	«Tengo un aire»	I have an air
52	«Tengo empacho»	I have empacho (blocked digestion)
53	«Me dio susto»	Fright gave itself to me
54	«Dicen que es mal de ojo»	They say it is the evil eye
55	«Me sobó una señora»	A lady rubbed/massaged me
56	«Tomo té de manzanilla»	I drink chamomile tea
57	«Me puse una ventosa»	I put a cupping glass on myself
58	«Me unté una pomada»	I smeared an ointment on myself
59	«Uso árnica para los golpes»	I use arnica for blows
60	«Me hicieron una limpia»	They did a cleansing for me
61	«Ando de los nervios»	I go around of the nerves
62	«Me untaron VapoRub»	They smeared VapoRub on me
63	«¿Es grave?»	Is it serious?
64	«¿Cuánto tiempo va a durar?»	How much time is it going to last?
65	«¿Puedo seguir trabajando?»	Can I keep working?
66	«¿Me va a tronar el cuello?»	Are you going to thunder my neck?
67	«Tengo miedo»	I have fear
68	«¿Necesito una radiografía?»	Do I need an X-ray?
69	«¿Voy a necesitar cirugía?»	Am I going to need surgery?
70	«¿Cuántas sesiones necesito?»	How many sessions do I need?
71	«¿Puedo hacer ejercicio?»	Can I do exercise?
72	«¿Por qué me duele si no me pegué?»	Why does it hurt if I didn't hit myself?
73	«¿Esto es de la edad?»	Is this from age?
74	«¿Me puedo tomar algo para el dolor?»	Can I take myself something for the pain?
75	«¿Y si no se me quita?»	And if it doesn't take itself off me?

Chapter 1

Describing Pain · Describir el dolor

Phrases 1–13

01 · «Me duele aquí»

Literal: It hurts me here — **What they mean:** Said while pointing or pressing a spot. The gesture is half the message — watch exactly where the hand goes, because the patient may not have words for that body part.

Roots: Doler comes from Latin dolere, to suffer or grieve — the same root that gives English 'condolence' and 'indolent'. Spanish grammar flips the sentence around: the body part is the subject and the person is the one it happens to, so 'me duele la espalda' is literally 'the back hurts-me'. Once you hear that pattern, dozens of pain phrases unlock, because the patient will use it for every part of the body.
Literal: "It hurts-me here" — the pain does the acting; the patient receives it.
Connects: The same frame builds me arde (#2), me punza (#3) and me duele al respirar (#6). Learn the frame, not each phrase.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Gracias por mostrármelo. ¿El dolor se queda ahí o se mueve a otro lado?» *(Thank you for showing me. Does the pain stay there, or does it move somewhere else?)*

1. —Me duele aquí, doctor, justo en esta parte de la espalda. *(It hurts here, doctor, right in this part of my back.)*
2. —No es todo el cuello, me duele aquí, de este lado. *(It's not my whole neck, it hurts here, on this side.)*
3. —Cuando me toco aquí, me duele más. *(When I touch myself here, it hurts more.)*
4. —¿Le duele aquí? —Sí, ahí mero es el dolor. *(Does it hurt here? —Yes, that's exactly where the pain is.)*
5. —Me duele aquí abajo, casi en la cadera. *(It hurts down here, almost at my hip.)*
6. —Ayer me dolía la espalda y hoy me duele aquí, en el hombro. *(Yesterday my back hurt and today it hurts here, in my shoulder.)*
7. —Me duele aquí nada más cuando levanto el brazo. *(It only hurts here when I lift my arm.)*

02 · «Me arde»

Literal: It burns me — **What they mean:** A burning sensation — skin, muscle, or nerve-type pain. Patients also use it for heartburn and for a wound or rash, so context matters.

Roots: Arder comes straight from Latin ardere, to burn — English keeps the same root in 'ardent' and 'arson'. The verb paints pain as fire, and patients reach for it when a pain feels hot rather than sharp or dull. In clinic Spanish, ardor can describe burning muscle pain, irritated skin, a stinging wound, or acid reflux, so the word tells you the quality of the pain, not its cause.
Literal: "It burns me" — pain described as fire.
Connects: Compare me quema, a close cousin patients swap freely with me arde, and #47 me siento inflamado, where heat shows up as swelling.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Entiendo. ¿Ese ardor es en la piel o lo siente más profundo?» *(I understand. Is that burning on the skin, or do you feel it deeper?)*

1. —Me arde la espalda después de trabajar todo el día. *(My back burns after working all day.)*
2. —Siento que me arde entre los hombros. *(I feel a burning between my shoulders.)*
3. —¿Le arde o le punza? —Me arde, como si tuviera algo caliente. *(Does it burn or stab? —It burns, like something hot is there.)*
4. —Me arde la piel donde me puse la pomada. *(My skin burns where I put the ointment.)*
5. —En la noche me arde más el cuello. *(At night my neck burns more.)*
6. —Me arde al moverme, no cuando estoy quieto. *(It burns when I move, not when I'm still.)*
7. —Traigo un ardor en la pierna desde la mañana. *(I've had a burning in my leg since this morning.)*

03 · «Me punza»

Literal: It stabs/pricks me — **What they mean:** A sharp, stabbing or jabbing pain, often brief and sudden — 'like a knife' or 'like a needle going in'.

Roots: Punzar grows out of Latin pungere, to prick or sting, and its past form punctum — the root inside English 'point', 'puncture' and 'punctual'. A punzada is one jab of that point. Patients use it for pain that arrives like a needle or a small knife: sudden, local, and gone again. If the patient says 'me dan punzadas', the pain comes in repeated jabs rather than one steady ache.
Literal: "It pricks me" — pain as the jab of a point.
Connects: Siento como agujas (#4) is the milder, tingling cousin; siento como una descarga (#9) is the electric version of the same sudden jab.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Esas punzadas vienen de repente o son constantes?» *(Do those stabbing pains come suddenly, or are they constant?)*

1. —Me punza el cuello cuando giro la cabeza. *(My neck stabs when I turn my head.)*
2. —Me dan punzadas en la espalda baja. *(I get stabbing pains in my lower back.)*
3. —Es una punzada fuerte y luego se quita. *(It's a strong stab and then it goes away.)*
4. —¿El dolor es constante? —No, me punza de vez en cuando. *(Is the pain constant? —No, it stabs me now and then.)*
5. —Me punza más cuando respiro profundo. *(It stabs more when I breathe deeply.)*
6. —Anoche me despertaron las punzadas en el hombro. *(Last night the stabbing pains in my shoulder woke me up.)*
7. —Siento que me punza justo debajo de la costilla. *(I feel it stabbing right under my rib.)*

04 · «Siento como agujas»

Literal: I feel like needles — **What they mean:** Pins and needles — a prickling, tingling sensation, often in a hand, arm, foot or leg. Patients may add 'como si me picaran' (like being pricked).

Roots: Aguja, needle, comes from a Latin diminutive of acus, needle — the same acus inside 'acute' and 'acupuncture'. Patients rarely say 'tingling' because Spanish has no everyday single word for it; instead they build a picture: 'como agujas', like needles. Listen for variations — 'como alfileres' (pins), 'como si me picaran hormigas' — all describing the same prickling, half-numb feeling clinicians chart as paresthesia.
Literal: "I feel as-if needles" — a picture, not a diagnosis word.
Connects: Pairs naturally with hormigueo (#5) and se me durmió el brazo (#18): three ways patients describe numbness and tingling.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿En qué parte siente las agujas: en la mano, en el brazo o en toda la pierna?» *(Where do you feel the pins and needles: in your hand, your arm, or your whole leg?)*

1. —Siento como agujas en los dedos de la mano. *(I feel pins and needles in my fingers.)*
2. —Cuando despierto, siento como agujas en todo el brazo. *(When I wake up, I feel pins and needles in my whole arm.)*
3. —¿Siente dolor? —No dolor, como agujas, como dormido. *(Do you feel pain? —Not pain, like needles, like it's asleep.)*
4. —Siento como agujas en los pies cuando camino mucho. *(I feel pins and needles in my feet when I walk a lot.)*
5. —Es como agujas y luego se me pasa moviendo la mano. *(It's like needles and then it goes away when I move my hand.)*
6. —Siento como agujas aquí, del codo para abajo. *(I feel pins and needles here, from the elbow down.)*
7. —Ya no es dolor, ahora siento como agujas todo el día. *(It's not pain anymore, now I feel pins and needles all day.)*

05 · «Tengo hormigueo»

Literal: I have ant-ing — **What they mean:** Tingling — the crawling, fizzing feeling of a limb 'waking up' or a nerve being irritated. Literally 'I have ants'.

Roots: Hormiga is the ant, from Latin formica — English 'formic acid' is named after ants for the same reason. Hormigueo is the feeling named after the insect: as if ants were crawling under the skin. It is the closest everyday Spanish word to 'tingling', and patients use it for hands that fall asleep at night, feet that buzz after standing, and the crawling edge of numbness.
Literal: "I have ant-crawling" — tingling pictured as ants under the skin.
Connects: Siento como agujas (#4) is the prickling version; hormigueo is the crawling one. Patients often use both in the same sentence.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Ese hormigueo le pasa en reposo o cuando usa la mano?» *(Does that tingling happen at rest, or when you use your hand?)*

1. —Tengo hormigueo en las manos casi todas las noches. *(I have tingling in my hands almost every night.)*
2. —Siento hormigueo en la pierna cuando estoy sentado mucho tiempo. *(I feel tingling in my leg when I sit for a long time.)*
3. —¿Tiene hormigueo ahora? —Sí, en estos dos dedos. *(Do you have tingling now? —Yes, in these two fingers.)*
4. —El hormigueo me despierta en la madrugada. *(The tingling wakes me up in the early morning.)*
5. —Tengo hormigueo y también siento la mano débil. *(I have tingling and my hand also feels weak.)*
6. —Cuando trabajo con las manos, me empieza el hormigueo. *(When I work with my hands, the tingling starts.)*
7. —Ya no tengo dolor, pero me quedó el hormigueo. *(I don't have pain anymore, but the tingling stayed.)*

06 · «Me duele al respirar»

Literal: It hurts me when breathing — **What they mean:** Pain on breathing — with rib, chest-wall or upper-back complaints this is common phrasing. Because it can also signal something beyond musculoskeletal care, take it seriously and ask more.

Roots: Respirar is Latin respirare — re-, again, plus spirare, to breathe, the root in 'inspire' and 'spirit'. The pattern 'me duele al + infinitive' is a clinic workhorse: it hurts 'on doing X'. Patients will plug in any action — al respirar, al toser, al agacharme — and each version localizes the problem differently. Learn the frame and you can both understand and ask about pain triggers in one move.
Literal: "It hurts me at-the to-breathe" — the frame is me duele al + action.
Connects: Me falta el aire (#40) is the worrying partner phrase; if both appear together, slow down and screen carefully before treating.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuénteme más de eso. ¿Le duele al respirar profundo o también le falta el aire?» *(Tell me more about that. Does it hurt when you breathe deeply, or are you also short of breath?)*

1. —Me duele al respirar, aquí en las costillas. *(It hurts when I breathe, here in my ribs.)*
2. —No puedo respirar profundo porque me duele. *(I can't breathe deeply because it hurts.)*
3. —¿Le duele al respirar o al moverse? —Al respirar y al toser. *(Does it hurt when you breathe or when you move? —When I breathe and when I cough.)*
4. —Me duele al respirar desde que me caí. *(It has hurt when I breathe since I fell.)*
5. —En la mañana me duele menos al respirar. *(In the morning it hurts less when I breathe.)*
6. —Siento que me duele al respirar, pero el aire no me falta. *(I feel pain when I breathe, but I'm not short of breath.)*
7. —Me duele al respirar y también cuando me río. *(It hurts when I breathe and also when I laugh.)*

07 · «Es un dolor sordo»

Literal: It is a deaf pain — **What they mean:** A dull, deep, background ache — not sharp, not stabbing. 'Sordo' (deaf/muffled) is the standard Spanish word for a dull pain quality.

Roots: Sordo is Latin surdus, deaf — English 'absurd' once meant 'out of tune, deaf to reason'. A dolor sordo is a pain that sounds muffled, as if heard through a wall: deep, dull, hard to point to. Clinicians chart it as a dull ache. Patients contrast it themselves: 'no es punzada, es un dolor sordo'. That contrast is diagnostic gold, so learn to hear the pair.
Literal: "A deaf pain" — muffled, deep, hard to localize.
Connects: The opposite pole of me punza (#3). Asking '¿es sordo o punzante?' gives you pain quality in the patient's own words.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Ese dolor sordo está todo el día o va y viene?» *(Is that dull ache there all day, or does it come and go?)*

1. —Es un dolor sordo, no fuerte, pero todo el día. *(It's a dull ache, not strong, but all day long.)*
2. —No me punza, es un dolor sordo en la espalda. *(It doesn't stab me, it's a dull ache in my back.)*
3. —¿Cómo es el dolor? —Sordo, como pesado. *(What's the pain like? —Dull, like heavy.)*
4. —Traigo un dolor sordo en el cuello desde hace semanas. *(I've had a dull ache in my neck for weeks.)*
5. —El dolor sordo me cansa más que un dolor fuerte. *(The dull ache tires me more than a strong pain.)*
6. —En reposo es un dolor sordo, pero si cargo algo, me punza. *(At rest it's a dull ache, but if I lift something, it stabs.)*
7. —Es un dolor sordo que no me deja concentrarme en el trabajo. *(It's a dull ache that doesn't let me concentrate at work.)*

08 · «Me dan calambres»

Literal: Cramps give themselves to me — **What they mean:** Muscle cramps or spasms that come on suddenly — in the legs, feet, back or neck, often at night or after exertion.

Roots: Calambre's exact origin is genuinely uncertain — dictionaries mark it unclear, possibly connected to a Germanic word for a clamp or cramp, which is also where English 'cramp' comes from. Whatever its route in, the clinic pattern is clear: 'me dan calambres', cramps 'give themselves' to the patient, arriving uninvited — in the calf at 3 a.m., in the foot at work, in the back when bending.
Literal: "Cramps give-me" — the cramps arrive on their own; the patient receives them.
Connects: The me dan frame also appears in me dan punzadas (#3) and me dan dolores de cabeza (#49) — one frame, many symptoms.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Dónde le dan los calambres y en qué momento: de noche o trabajando?» *(Where do you get the cramps, and when: at night or while working?)*

1. —Me dan calambres en las piernas en la noche. *(I get cramps in my legs at night.)*
2. —Cuando estiro la pierna, me da un calambre en el pie. *(When I stretch my leg, I get a cramp in my foot.)*
3. —¿Le dan calambres seguido? —Sí, dos o tres veces por semana. *(Do you get cramps often? —Yes, two or three times a week.)*
4. —Me dan calambres en la espalda cuando levanto cajas. *(I get cramps in my back when I lift boxes.)*
5. —El calambre me dura unos minutos y luego se quita. *(The cramp lasts a few minutes and then it goes away.)*
6. —Me dan calambres hasta en las manos cuando trabajo. *(I even get cramps in my hands when I work.)*
7. —Anoche me dio un calambre tan fuerte que me despertó. *(Last night I got a cramp so strong it woke me up.)*

09 · «Siento como una descarga eléctrica»

Literal: I feel like an electric shock/discharge — **What they mean:** Electric-shock pain — a sudden zing, often shooting down an arm or leg. Patients also say 'como un toque' (like a shock from an outlet) or 'como un corrientazo'.

Roots: Descarga is des- plus carga, a load — an unloading, the same word used for an electric discharge and for unloading a truck. In folk clinic Spanish the body is wired like a house: nerves carry current, and a trapped nerve gives 'toques', little shocks, the word for touching a live wire. When a patient says 'descarga', 'toque' or 'corrientazo', they are describing radiating, nerve-type pain with an electric metaphor.
Literal: "Like an electric unloading" — pain as current running down a wire.
Connects: The travelling partner of el dolor se me va para la pierna (#10): this is the quality, that one is the route.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Esa descarga le corre hacia el brazo o hacia la pierna? Muéstreme el camino que hace.» *(Does that shock run toward your arm or your leg? Show me the path it takes.)*

1. —Siento como una descarga eléctrica que me baja por la pierna. *(I feel like an electric shock that runs down my leg.)*
2. —Cuando giro el cuello, siento como un toque en el brazo. *(When I turn my neck, I feel like a shock in my arm.)*
3. —¿Es un dolor o una descarga? —Una descarga, rápida, como corriente. *(Is it a pain or a shock? —A shock, fast, like current.)*
4. —Siento como una descarga desde la espalda hasta el pie. *(I feel like a shock from my back all the way to my foot.)*
5. —Me da la descarga cuando me agacho. *(The shock hits me when I bend over.)*
6. —Es como una descarga eléctrica, dura un segundo. *(It's like an electric shock, it lasts one second.)*
7. —Antes era dolor sordo, ahora siento como descargas. *(Before it was a dull ache, now I feel shock-like pains.)*

10 · «El dolor se me va para la pierna»

Literal: The pain goes itself to the leg for me — **What they mean:** Radiating pain — the pain travels from the back into the leg (or from the neck into the arm). The patient is describing referral/radiation in their own words.

Roots: Spanish lets pain move like a person: 'se me va para la pierna', it goes off to the leg on me. That little 'se me' construction — the same one in 'se me durmió el brazo' — marks something happening to you, outside your control. When pain 'goes' somewhere, the patient is mapping radiation for you. Your follow-up is built into the metaphor: ask how far it travels and by which road.
Literal: "The pain goes-itself on-me toward the leg" — pain as a traveller, patient as bystander.
Connects: Se me subió el dolor (#17) is the upward version; siento un nervio apretado (#24) is the explanation patients give for both.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Hasta dónde le llega el dolor: hasta la rodilla o hasta el pie?» *(How far does the pain reach: to your knee, or all the way to your foot?)*

1. —El dolor empieza en la espalda y se me va para la pierna. *(The pain starts in my back and goes into my leg.)*
2. —Se me va para la pierna derecha, hasta la pantorrilla. *(It goes into my right leg, down to my calf.)*
3. —¿El dolor se queda en la espalda? —No, se me va para la pierna. *(Does the pain stay in your back? —No, it goes into my leg.)*
4. —Cuando estoy parado mucho tiempo, el dolor se me va para la pierna. *(When I stand for a long time, the pain goes into my leg.)*
5. —El dolor del cuello se me va para el brazo. *(The neck pain goes into my arm.)*
6. —A veces nada más llega a la rodilla, a veces hasta el pie. *(Sometimes it only reaches my knee, sometimes all the way to my foot.)*
7. —Se me va para la pierna y siento hormigueo en el pie. *(It goes into my leg and I feel tingling in my foot.)*

11 · «Me duele más en la noche»

Literal: It hurts me more at night — **What they mean:** Night pain — pain that worsens lying down or disturbs sleep. Worth careful questions: night pain that never eases deserves extra screening.

Roots: This is a pattern phrase rather than a single image: 'me duele más' plus a time — en la noche, en la mañana, con el frío. Patients organize pain by the clock because that is how they live it. Night pain matters clinically in two directions: the mechanical kind that eases when they find the right position, and the kind that wakes them at the same hour regardless — a distinction your questions, not the phrase alone, must draw out.
Literal: "It hurts me more in the night" — pain reported on a clock, not a scale.
Connects: No dormí nada (#42) is often the next sentence; ando tieso en la mañana is the morning mirror image of this phrase.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿El dolor lo despierta en la noche, o le cuesta dormirse por el dolor?» *(Does the pain wake you at night, or does it keep you from falling asleep?)*

1. —Me duele más en la noche, cuando me acuesto. *(It hurts more at night, when I lie down.)*
2. —En el día trabajo bien, pero me duele más en la noche. *(During the day I work fine, but it hurts more at night.)*
3. —¿Le duele todo el día igual? —No, me duele más en la noche. *(Does it hurt the same all day? —No, it hurts more at night.)*
4. —Me duele más en la noche y no encuentro posición. *(It hurts more at night and I can't find a comfortable position.)*
5. —El dolor me despierta como a las tres de la mañana. *(The pain wakes me up around three in the morning.)*
6. —Me duele más en la noche cuando el día fue pesado. *(It hurts more at night when the day was heavy.)*
7. —Con una almohada entre las piernas me duele menos en la noche. *(With a pillow between my legs it hurts less at night.)*

12 · «No aguanto el dolor»

Literal: I can't hold/endure the pain — **What they mean:** The pain is unbearable — the patient is at their limit. It signals distress as much as intensity; respond to the person, not just the pain score.

Roots: Aguantar is to hold up under weight — likely from a root of holding or sustaining, and it gives Spanish its everyday word for enduring anything: pain, heat, a difficult boss. 'No aguanto' is not a number on a scale; it is a person saying their capacity is used up. In the clinic it deserves a slower voice and an acknowledgement first, because the patient is telling you about suffering, not only sensation.
Literal: "I don't hold-up the pain" — endurance pictured as carrying a load that got too heavy.
Connects: Compare cargué algo pesado (#30): the same load metaphor, one literal, one emotional. Tengo miedo (#67) often follows.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Siento mucho que esté así. Vamos a revisar con calma qué está pasando y qué podemos hacer hoy.» *(I'm very sorry you're going through this. Let's calmly check what's going on and what we can do today.)*

1. —Doctor, ya no aguanto el dolor, es todos los días. *(Doctor, I can't stand the pain anymore, it's every day.)*
2. —Hay momentos en que no aguanto el dolor de cuello. *(There are moments when I can't stand the neck pain.)*
3. —¿Cómo ha estado? —Mal, ya no aguanto el dolor para trabajar. *(How have you been? —Bad, I can't stand the pain to work anymore.)*
4. —No aguanto el dolor cuando manejo trayectos largos. *(I can't stand the pain when I drive long stretches.)*
5. —Mi esposa me dijo que viniera porque ya no aguanto el dolor. *(My wife told me to come because I can't stand the pain anymore.)*
6. —No aguanto el dolor ni sentado ni parado. *(I can't stand the pain sitting or standing.)*
7. —A veces no aguanto el dolor y me tengo que acostar. *(Sometimes I can't stand the pain and I have to lie down.)*

13 · «Es un dolor que va y viene»

Literal: It is a pain that goes and comes — **What they mean:** Intermittent pain — it comes and goes rather than staying constant. Patients use it to contrast with a fixed, all-day pain.

Roots: Ir y venir, to go and come, is Spanish's natural way of describing anything that oscillates — buses, seasons, fevers, pains. The phrase carries no image of the body at all; it is about rhythm. That makes it a useful sorting question in your hands: pain that 'va y viene' with movement points one way; pain that comes and goes on its own schedule, unrelated to anything, invites different questions.
Literal: "A pain that goes and comes" — defined by its rhythm, not its location.
Connects: The temporal partner of es un dolor sordo (#7): one describes quality, the other pattern. Chart both.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuando viene el dolor, ¿qué está haciendo usted normalmente?» *(When the pain comes, what are you usually doing?)*

1. —Es un dolor que va y viene, no está siempre. *(It's a pain that comes and goes, it's not always there.)*
2. —Me viene el dolor cuando cargo a mi nieta, y luego se va. *(The pain comes when I pick up my granddaughter, and then it goes.)*
3. —¿El dolor es constante? —No, va y viene durante el día. *(Is the pain constant? —No, it comes and goes during the day.)*
4. —Es un dolor que va y viene con el frío. *(It's a pain that comes and goes with the cold.)*
5. —A veces pasa una semana sin dolor, y de repente viene. *(Sometimes a week goes by without pain, and suddenly it comes.)*
6. —El dolor va y viene, pero cada vez viene más fuerte. *(The pain comes and goes, but each time it comes stronger.)*
7. —Cuando viene, me tengo que sentar un rato. *(When it comes, I have to sit down for a while.)*

Chapter 2

Back and Neck · Espalda y cuello

Phrases 14–25

14 · «Me tronó la espalda»

Literal: My back thundered/cracked on me — **What they mean:** The patient heard or felt a pop or crack in the back, usually at the moment pain started. For many patients this is THE key event of their story.

Roots: Tronar is the verb for thunder, built on Latin tonare — English 'detonate' and 'astonish' carry the same thunder. In everyday Mexican Spanish tronar also means to snap, crack or pop, so a back, a knee or fingers 'thunder' when they make that sound. Patients often date the whole problem from that noise: 'me tronó y de ahí empezó todo'. Hear it as a starting gun in their history.
Literal: "My back thundered on-me" — a joint noise heard as a small thunderclap.
Connects: Me cruje todo (#23) is the noisy cousin; me quedé trabado (#21) is what happens when the 'crack' leaves stiffness behind.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuénteme exactamente qué estaba haciendo cuando le tronó la espalda, y qué sintió luego luego.» *(Tell me exactly what you were doing when your back cracked, and what you felt right after.)*

1. —Me tronó la espalda cuando me agaché a levantar una caja. *(My back cracked when I bent over to pick up a box.)*
2. —Me volteé rápido y me tronó la espalda, y de ahí me empezó a doler. *(I turned quickly and my back cracked, and that's when it started hurting.)*
3. —¿Pasó algo? —Nada grave, me tronó la espalda al levantarme. *(Did something happen? —Nothing serious, my back cracked when I got up.)*
4. —A mi esposo le tronó la espalda y ahora apenas puede caminar. *(My husband's back cracked and now he can barely walk.)*
5. —Me tronó la espalda en el trabajo y me quedé con el dolor. *(My back cracked at work and the pain stayed with me.)*
6. —Me da miedo moverme; me tronó la espalda en la mañana. *(I'm afraid to move; my back cracked this morning.)*
7. —No siempre me truena, pero cuando me truena, me duele por días. *(It doesn't always crack, but when it does, it hurts for days.)*

15 · «Ando todo contracturado»

Literal: I go around all contracted — **What they mean:** Feeling stiff, tight, knotted up — muscle tension and guarding. One of the most common phrases in a chiropractic office. Note the verb 'ando': the state travels with the patient.

Roots: Contracturado is the patient's word for a body in contractura — muscles held in contraction, from Latin contrahere, to draw together, the root of English 'contract'. 'Ando' does quiet work here: andar means to walk, but also to go about in a state, so 'ando contracturado' means 'this stiffness comes with me everywhere'. Clinicians would say muscle spasm and guarding; the patient says their body is tied in knots.
Literal: "I go-around all contracted" — stiffness as something you carry through the day.
Connects: Siento la espalda pesada (#22) is the tired version; ando chueco (#26) is what severe contractura can look like from outside.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Vamos a revisar qué músculos están más tensos. ¿Se va aflojando en el día o va empeorando?» *(Let's check which muscles are tightest. Does it loosen up as the day goes on, or does it get worse?)*

1. —Ando todo contracturado, doctor, traigo toda la espalda dura. *(I'm all knotted up, doctor, my whole back is hard.)*
2. —Ando contracturado del cuello por la computadora. *(My neck is knotted up from the computer.)*
3. —¿Se siente tieso? —Sí, todo contracturado, como una cuerda. *(Do you feel stiff? —Yes, all knotted up, like a rope.)*
4. —Después del accidente quedé todo contracturado. *(After the accident I was left all knotted up.)*
5. —Ando contracturado de aquí, de toda esta parte del hombro. *(I'm knotted up here, in this whole part of my shoulder.)*
6. —Amanezco contracturado y en el día me voy aflojando. *(I wake up knotted up and I loosen up during the day.)*
7. —Mi esposa dice que camino todo contracturado. *(My wife says I walk all knotted up.)*

16 · «Tengo una bola aquí»

Literal: I have a ball here — **What they mean:** A palpable knot or lump the patient can feel — usually a tense muscle knot or trigger point in their mind, and they will want you to touch it.

Roots: Bola is a ball, from a Latin word for a round bubble or bead. The patient is doing what good examiners do — reporting a finding: something round, hard and tender that they can locate with a finger. In the neck and between the shoulders it is nearly always what they mean by a muscle knot. Because patients sometimes fear a lump means something serious, they may press you about it; examine it openly and explain what you feel.
Literal: "I have a ball here" — a muscle knot described by shape, not anatomy.
Connects: Pairs with se me subió el dolor (#17): the lump is a place, the rising pain is a movement — patients combine both in one story.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Déjeme sentirla con cuidado. ¿Le duele cuando la aprieto, o también sin tocarla?» *(Let me feel it carefully. Does it hurt when I press it, or also without touching it?)*

1. —Tengo una bola aquí, tóquela, está dura. *(I have a lump here, feel it, it's hard.)*
2. —Se me hizo una bola en el cuello y me duele al apretarla. *(A lump formed in my neck and it hurts when I press it.)*
3. —¿Esa bola está siempre? —Se me hace más grande cuando estoy estresado. *(Is that lump always there? —It gets bigger when I'm stressed.)*
4. —Tengo una bola entre los hombros que nunca se me quita. *(I have a lump between my shoulders that never goes away.)*
5. —Mi esposa me soba la bola y me siento mejor un rato. *(My wife massages the lump and I feel better for a while.)*
6. —Desde la caída me quedó esta bola en la espalda. *(Since the fall, this lump was left in my back.)*
7. —Se siente una bola, como un músculo hecho nudo. *(It feels like a lump, like a knotted muscle.)*

17 · «Se me subió el dolor»

Literal: The pain climbed up on me — **What they mean:** The pain has spread or travelled upward — e.g., from the low back toward the neck or head. Patients experience pain as something that moves around the body.

Roots: Subir is to go up, climb or rise. Spanish patients track pain like weather moving across a map: it rises, it goes down to the leg, it settles in the neck. 'Se me subió' — it climbed up on me — again uses that involuntary 'se me', pain acting on its own. For your notes, translate movement into anatomy: onset location, current extent, direction of spread. The patient's map and yours should end up describing the same territory.
Literal: "The pain climbed-up on-me" — pain moving house, upward.
Connects: El dolor se me va para la pierna (#10) travels outward; this one travels up. Both use the pain-as-traveller metaphor.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Dónde empezó el dolor y hasta dónde llega ahora?» *(Where did the pain start, and where does it reach now?)*

1. —El dolor empieza en la cintura y se me sube hasta el cuello. *(The pain starts in my lower back and rises to my neck.)*
2. —Ayer era nada más la espalda, y hoy se me subió el dolor. *(Yesterday it was only my back, and today the pain rose up.)*
3. —¿El dolor se mueve? —Sí, se me sube del hombro a la cabeza. *(Does the pain move? —Yes, it rises from my shoulder to my head.)*
4. —Cuando me estreso, se me sube el dolor por la espalda. *(When I get stressed, the pain rises up my back.)*
5. —Se me subió el dolor al cuello y ahora me duele también la cabeza. *(The pain rose into my neck and now my head hurts too.)*
6. —No se me baja a la pierna, más bien se me sube. *(It doesn't go down to my leg, it rises upward instead.)*
7. —Siento que el dolor se me va subiendo poco a poco en el día. *(I feel the pain rise little by little during the day.)*

18 · «Se me durmió el brazo»

Literal: My arm fell asleep on me — **What they mean:** Numbness — the arm, hand or leg 'falls asleep'. Same idiom as English, and patients use it for anything from brief positional numbness to persistent loss of feeling.

Roots: Dormir is Latin dormire, to sleep — English 'dormant' and 'dormitory' are its cousins. English speakers say a limb 'fell asleep' too, and both languages mean the same event: feeling switched off, then waking with pins and needles. The Spanish 'se me durmió' adds the involuntary frame — it happened to me. What matters clinically is pattern: which limb, which position, how long to recover, and whether strength goes with it.
Literal: "The arm slept itself on-me" — numbness as a limb taking a nap.
Connects: Hormigueo (#5) and siento como agujas (#4) are its siblings — patients often report all three for the same limb.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuando se le duerme el brazo, ¿cuánto tarda en sentirlo normal otra vez?» *(When your arm falls asleep, how long does it take to feel normal again?)*

1. —Se me durmió el brazo en la noche y tardó en despertarse. *(My arm fell asleep during the night and it took a while to wake up.)*
2. —Trabajo y se me duerme la mano. *(I work and my hand falls asleep.)*
3. —¿Se le duerme el brazo? —Sí, todo el brazo, desde el hombro. *(Does your arm fall asleep? —Yes, the whole arm, from the shoulder down.)*
4. —Cuando manejo, se me duerme la pierna. *(When I drive, my leg falls asleep.)*
5. —Se me durmió el brazo y luego sentí hormigueo. *(My arm fell asleep and then I felt tingling.)*
6. —Me preocupa porque se me duerme la mano todos los días. *(It worries me because my hand falls asleep every day.)*
7. —Se me duerme cuando duermo de ese lado. *(It falls asleep when I sleep on that side.)*

19 · «Tengo el cuello tieso»

Literal: I have the neck stiff — **What they mean:** A stiff neck — limited, guarded movement, often after sleeping badly ('dormí mal') or a long drive. Patients may say 'no lo puedo mover'.

Roots: Tieso means stiff, taut, stretched tight — it comes from Latin tensus, stretched, the past form of tendere, which also gives English 'tense' and 'tension'. A cuello tieso is a neck pulled tight like a rope. Patients often blame sleep: 'dormí mal', 'me acosté mal'. The word tells you about restricted motion more than pain intensity, so your exam should follow the word — measure the turn, not just the tenderness.
Literal: "I have the neck stiff/taut" — a neck pulled tight like a rope.
Connects: Ando todo contracturado (#15) is the whole-back version; no puedo agacharme (#20) is often its consequence in the low back.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Vamos a revisar con cuidado hasta dónde puede girar. No lo fuerce, solo hasta donde llegue.» *(Let's gently check how far you can turn. Don't force it, just go to where it stops.)*

1. —Tengo el cuello tieso, no lo puedo girar bien. *(I have a stiff neck, I can't turn it well.)*
2. —Amanecí con el cuello tieso, así, trabado. *(I woke up with a stiff neck, like this, stuck.)*
3. —¿Se siente tieso? —El cuello tieso, sobre todo en las mañanas. *(Do you feel stiff? —My neck is stiff, especially in the mornings.)*
4. —Dormí mal y traigo el cuello tieso. *(I slept badly and my neck is stiff.)*
5. —El cuello tieso me da dolor de cabeza. *(My stiff neck gives me headaches.)*
6. —Para ver de lado tengo que girar todo el cuerpo. *(To look sideways I have to turn my whole body.)*
7. —Llevo una semana con el cuello tieso y no se me afloja. *(It's been a week with a stiff neck and it won't loosen.)*

20 · «No puedo agacharme»

Literal: I can't bend myself down — **What they mean:** Loss of flexion — the patient cannot bend forward, squat down, or get down to floor level. A functional report, not just a pain report.

Roots: Agacharse is to crouch or bend down low — the word likely comes from an old root for bending or squatting, and it is the verb of everyday function: tying shoes, picking up a child, working at floor level. 'No puedo' phrases are functional gold in a history: they tell you what the injury costs the patient daily. Always ask the natural follow-up — what happens if you try: pain, stiffness, or fear?
Literal: "I can't bend-myself" — a lost movement described as a lost ability.
Connects: Me quedé trabado (#21) is the sudden, total version of the same limitation; me caí (#27) is how it sometimes happens.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Muéstreme hasta dónde puede agacharse sin forzarlo. Solo quiero ver dónde se detiene.» *(Show me how far you can bend without forcing it. I just want to see where it stops.)*

1. —No puedo agacharme para amarrarme los zapatos. *(I can't bend over to tie my shoes.)*
2. —Cuando me agacho, me tengo que agarrar de algo para levantarme. *(When I bend over, I have to hold onto something to get back up.)*
3. —¿Puede agacharse? —No completo, a la mitad me atoro. *(Can you bend over? —Not all the way, halfway I get stuck.)*
4. —No puedo agacharme ni recoger cosas del suelo. *(I can't bend over or pick things up off the floor.)*
5. —Antes me agachaba bien, y desde el golpe no puedo. *(Before, I bent over fine, and since the blow I can't.)*
6. —No puedo agacharme sin que me duela la espalda. *(I can't bend over without my back hurting.)*
7. —Para recoger algo doblo las rodillas, porque no me puedo agachar. *(To pick something up I bend my knees, because I can't bend over.)*

21 · «Me quedé trabado»

Literal: I stayed locked/jammed — **What they mean:** The back 'locked up' — the patient got stuck in a bent position or cannot straighten up. An acute episode description, often with real fear attached.

Roots: Traba is a lock, bolt or obstacle — from the world of beams and bars, trabs in Latin being a beam. Trabado is jammed, bolted, stuck. A patient who 'se quedó trabado' is describing the classic acute low-back episode: bent to pick something up, and the back simply refused to come back. Notice the quedarse frame — 'I was left' — as if the body did it and left them there.
Literal: "I stayed locked" — the back as a door that jammed shut.
Connects: Me tronó la espalda (#14) is often the sound at the start; ando chueco (#26) is how a trabado patient may walk in.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Eso puede dar miedo. Vamos a revisar su movimiento poco a poco, sin forzar nada.» *(That can be frightening. Let's check your movement little by little, without forcing anything.)*

1. —Me quedé trabado, doctor, me agaché y ya no pude enderezarme. *(I got stuck, doctor, I bent over and couldn't straighten up.)*
2. —Me quedé trabado en el trabajo y me tuvieron que ayudar mis compañeros. *(I got stuck at work and my coworkers had to help me.)*
3. —¿Le ha pasado antes? —Sí, me quedo trabado dos o tres veces al año. *(Has it happened before? —Yes, I get stuck two or three times a year.)*
4. —Me quedé trabado al bajar del carro. *(I got stuck getting out of the car.)*
5. —Cuando me quedo trabado, el dolor me dura tres o cuatro días. *(When I get stuck, the pain lasts three or four days.)*
6. —Quedé trabado y caminando chueco. *(I was left stuck and walking crooked.)*
7. —Me da miedo agacharme; tengo miedo de quedarme trabado. *(It scares me to bend over; I'm afraid of getting stuck.)*

22 · «Siento la espalda pesada»

Literal: I feel the back heavy — **What they mean:** A heavy, tired, dragging feeling in the back or shoulders — fatigue and ache rather than sharp pain. Patients contrast it themselves with 'dolor fuerte'.

Roots: Pesado is heavy, from pensar in its older sense of weighing — Latin pensare, to weigh, which gives English 'pensive' for a mind weighed down. Spanish uses pesado for heavy objects, heavy weather and tedious people, and patients borrow it for a back that feels like a load. Heaviness usually signals fatigue and postural strain in their story, which is why the follow-up question is about timing: worse as the day loads up, or there from the start?
Literal: "I feel the back heavy" — fatigue given weight.
Connects: Ando todo contracturado (#15) is the muscular cause patients name; this phrase is the sensation it produces.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Esa pesadez se siente más como cansancio al final del día, o está desde la mañana?» *(Does that heaviness feel more like tiredness at the end of the day, or is it there from the morning?)*

1. —Siento la espalda pesada, como si trajera algo cargando. *(I feel my back is heavy, like I'm carrying something.)*
2. —En las tardes siento la espalda pesada y cansada. *(In the afternoons I feel my back is heavy and tired.)*
3. —¿Es dolor o pesadez? —Pesadez, como cansancio. *(Is it pain or heaviness? —Heaviness, like exhaustion.)*
4. —Siento la espalda pesada después de estar parado todo el día. *(I feel my back is heavy after standing all day.)*
5. —Siento los hombros pesados, como si me jalaran hacia abajo. *(My shoulders feel heavy, as if they were pulling me down.)*
6. —Amanezco bien, pero a mediodía ya siento la espalda pesada. *(I wake up fine, but by midday I feel my back is heavy.)*
7. —No es dolor fuerte, es una espalda pesada que no me deja descansar. *(It's not strong pain, it's a heavy back that won't let me rest.)*

23 · «Me cruje todo»

Literal: Everything creaks on me — **What they mean:** Joints that crack, pop or creak with movement — neck, back, knees, shoulders. Patients often worry the noise means damage, which is a question underneath the statement.

Roots: Crujir is the creak of a door, the crunch of dry leaves — a sound word, built to imitate what it names. English 'creak' and 'crunch' are its sound-cousins in spirit if not in root. Patients use crujir for the everyday soundtrack of their joints, and underneath the report there is often a worry: is the noise wearing something out? Your reply should separate noise from pain, because patients merge them.
Literal: "Everything creaks on-me" — joints heard as old hinges.
Connects: Me tronó la espalda (#14) is one crack that mattered; crujidos everywhere is the chronic background version.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Vamos a revisar en qué movimientos se escucha el ruido. ¿El crujido viene con dolor o es solo el sonido?» *(Let's check which movements make the noise. Does the cracking come with pain, or just the sound?)*

1. —Me cruje todo, doctor: el cuello, la espalda, las rodillas. *(Everything cracks, doctor — my neck, my back, my knees.)*
2. —Cuando giro el cuello me cruje mucho. *(When I turn my neck it cracks a lot.)*
3. —¿Le cruje con dolor o sin dolor? —Me cruje, pero también me duele el cuello. *(Does it crack with pain or without pain? —It cracks, but the neck also hurts.)*
4. —Me cruje la espalda cuando me estiro en la mañana. *(My back cracks when I stretch in the morning.)*
5. —Antes no me crujía nada; ahora me cruje todo. *(Before, nothing cracked; now everything cracks.)*
6. —Me cruje el hombro cada vez que levanto el brazo. *(My shoulder cracks every time I lift my arm.)*
7. —Me preocupa que me cruja tanto la espalda. *(It worries me that my back cracks so much.)*

24 · «Siento un nervio apretado»

Literal: I feel a squeezed nerve — **What they mean:** The patient's own explanation: a pinched nerve. Said with the confidence of a self-diagnosis — acknowledge it respectfully, then examine and explain in your own terms.

Roots: Apretado is squeezed or pressed tight, from apretar, to press — its root is Latin pectus, chest, via the idea of pressing something to the chest. 'Nervio apretado' is the great folk diagnosis of Latin American back pain: a nerve caught and squeezed, sending pain down its line. The patient is offering you their model of the problem. Good practice is to receive the model, examine properly, and then explain your findings alongside theirs — never over theirs.
Literal: "A nerve squeezed-tight" — the patient's own mechanical explanation.
Connects: This is the folk explanation behind el dolor se me va para la pierna (#10) and las descargas (#9) — hear all three as one story.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Es posible; hay varias cosas que se pueden sentir así. Vamos a revisarlo con cuidado para ver qué está pasando.» *(That's possible; there are several things that can feel that way. Let's examine you carefully to see what's going on.)*

1. —Siento un nervio apretado en la espalda. *(I feel like I have a pinched nerve in my back.)*
2. —Mi abuela dice que es un nervio apretado. *(My grandmother says it's a pinched nerve.)*
3. —¿Qué siente? —Como un nervio apretado que me manda el dolor a la pierna. *(What do you feel? —Like a pinched nerve that shoots pain into my leg.)*
4. —Desde que levanté la caja, siento un nervio apretado. *(Since I lifted the box, I feel a pinched nerve.)*
5. —Creo que traigo un nervio apretado en el cuello. *(I think I have a pinched nerve in my neck.)*
6. —El nervio apretado no me deja dormir de ese lado. *(The pinched nerve won't let me sleep on that side.)*
7. —Si me siento mal, siento luego luego el nervio apretado. *(If I sit badly, I feel the pinched nerve right away.)*

26 · «Ando chueco»

Literal: I walk crooked — **What they mean:** Walking with a list or lean — an antalgic posture the patient (or their family) has noticed. Often said a little sheepishly, as if confessing.

Roots: Chueco means crooked, bent out of true — its origin is uncertain, possibly from an indigenous language of the Americas, and it is deeply Mexican everyday vocabulary: crooked pictures, crooked deals, crooked walking. 'Ando chueco' again uses andar for a state you carry around. The patient has usually been told by family before they tell you, so the phrase often arrives with embarrassment. Watch the walk yourself; the report and your observation together are the finding.
Literal: "I walk crooked" — posture reported as a confession.
Connects: ¿Es grave? (#63) is the question that usually follows this confession; me siento débil (#41) is its whole-body cousin.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Gracias por decirme. Vamos a ver cómo camina y cómo se mueve su espalda al estar de pie.» *(Thank you for telling me. Let's look at how you walk and how your back moves when you stand.)*

1. —Hasta camino chueco, doctor, vea cómo vengo. *(I even walk crooked, doctor, look how I come in.)*
2. —Me duele la espalda y camino chueco, cargado a un lado. *(My back hurts and I walk crooked, leaning to one side.)*
3. —¿Nota que camina chueco? —Sí, mi esposa me lo dice todos los días. *(Do you notice you walk crooked? —Yes, my wife tells me every day.)*
4. —Después del golpe quedé caminando chueco una semana. *(After the blow I was left walking crooked for a week.)*
5. —Camino chueco porque enderezarme me duele. *(I walk crooked because straightening up hurts.)*
6. —En las mañanas camino chueco y luego me voy enderezando. *(In the mornings I walk crooked and then I straighten out.)*
7. —Me preocupa caminar chueco frente a la gente. *(It worries me to walk crooked in front of people.)*

25 · «Me duele la cintura»

Literal: My waist hurts me — **What they mean:** Low back pain. In Mexican Spanish, 'la cintura' (the waist) is the everyday name for the lower back — when a patient says their waist hurts, they mean their lumbar region, not their abdomen.

Roots: Cintura comes from Latin cinctura, a girdle or belt, from cingere, to gird — English 'cinch' and 'precinct' share the root. Spanish kept the word for the waist, and Mexican patients extended it to the whole belt-line region, front and back. In clinic after clinic, 'me duele la cintura' turns out to mean the low back once the patient points. It is one of the highest-value vocabulary items in this book: one word, constantly mistranslated.
Literal: "My waist hurts-me" — waist standing in for the low back.
Connects: Me duele aquí (#1) is how you confirm it: ask the patient to show you. Cargué algo pesado (#30) is the most common story attached to it.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuando dice la cintura, ¿es atrás, en la espalda baja? Muéstreme con la mano.» *(When you say your waist, is it in the back, in the lower back? Show me with your hand.)*

1. —Me duele la cintura desde que cargué las cajas. *(—My waist has hurt since I lifted the boxes.)*
2. —No es la espalda completa, es la cintura, aquí atrás. *(—It's not my whole back, it's my waist, back here.)*
3. —¿Le duele la cintura o la espalda alta? —La cintura, abajo. *(—Does your waist hurt or your upper back? —My waist, down low.)*
4. —Me duele la cintura cuando estoy mucho tiempo parado. *(—My waist hurts when I stand for a long time.)*
5. —Mi papá también sufre de la cintura. *(—My father also suffers from his waist.)*
6. —Se me va el dolor de la cintura a la pierna. *(—The pain goes from my waist into my leg.)*
7. —Traigo una faja porque me duele la cintura. *(—I'm wearing a brace because my waist hurts.)*

Chapter 3

Injuries and Accidents · Lesiones y accidentes

Phrases 27–38

27 · «Me caí»

Literal: I fell myself — **What they mean:** I fell. The start of many injury histories — always follow with: from how high, onto what, and what did you land on?

Roots: Caer is Latin cadere, to fall — the root inside 'accident' (what falls toward you), 'incident' and 'cadence'. 'Me caí' with its reflexive is the ordinary way to report a fall, and it opens a door you must walk through carefully: falls from height, falls with head impact, and falls in older patients all change the exam. The phrase is short; the questions behind it — height, surface, first contact, loss of consciousness — are the history.
Literal: "I fell-myself" — the reflexive marks it as something that befell you.
Connects: Me resbalé (#31) is its common partner; me pegué en la cabeza (#29) is the detail that changes how carefully you proceed.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Lo siento. Cuénteme cómo fue la caída: ¿de qué altura y qué parte del cuerpo se golpeó primero?» *(I'm sorry. Tell me how the fall happened: from what height, and what part of your body hit first?)*

1. —Me caí en la casa, en las escaleras, y caí de espaldas. *(I fell at home, on the stairs, and landed on my back.)*
2. —Me caí de una escalera en el trabajo. *(I fell off a ladder at work.)*
3. —¿Le pasó algo? —Sí, me caí el domingo y desde entonces me duele. *(Did something happen to you? —Yes, I fell on Sunday and since then it hurts.)*
4. —Me caí y me agarré con las manos. *(I fell and caught myself with my hands.)*
5. —Mi mamá se cayó anoche en el baño. *(My mother fell in the bathroom last night.)*
6. —Me caí pero no me pegué en la cabeza. *(I fell but I didn't hit my head.)*
7. —Desde que me caí, me duele la cintura al caminar. *(Since I fell, my waist hurts when I walk.)*

28 · «Me torcí el tobillo»

Literal: I twisted my ankle on myself — **What they mean:** A sprain — ankle most often, also wrist or knee. Patients say 'me torcí' or 'me doblé' for the same event.

Roots: Torcer is Latin torquere, to twist — English 'torque', 'torture' and 'contort' are its family. A torcedura is a sprain: ligaments twisted past their range. Mexican patients use torcí for ankles, wrists and knees alike, and often add the detail that matters — 'se me hinchó' (it swelled), 'no lo puedo apoyar' (I can't bear weight). Your exam starts from their sentence; each added detail narrows what you must rule out.
Literal: "I twisted the ankle on-me" — the joint turned the wrong way.
Connects: Se me dobló la rodilla (#35) is its knee counterpart; me lastimé trabajando (#32) is how the story is often summarized.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Vamos a verlo. ¿Puede apoyarlo o le duele demasiado para pisar?» *(Let's look at it. Can you put weight on it, or does it hurt too much to step?)*

1. —Me torcí el tobillo bajando las escaleras. *(I twisted my ankle coming down the stairs.)*
2. —Me torcí el tobillo jugando fútbol y se me hinchó. *(I twisted my ankle playing soccer and it swelled up.)*
3. —¿Cuándo se lo torció? —Ayer, y hoy casi no puedo apoyarlo. *(When did you twist it? —Yesterday, and today I can barely step on it.)*
4. —Me torcí el tobillo y escuché un tronido. *(I twisted my ankle and heard a crack.)*
5. —Me tuerzo el mismo tobillo cada año. *(I twist the same ankle every year.)*
6. —Se me torció el tobillo hacia adentro. *(My ankle twisted inward.)*
7. —Me torcí la muñeca al agarrarme cuando me caí. *(I twisted my wrist catching myself when I fell.)*

29 · «Me pegué en la cabeza»

Literal: I hit myself on the head — **What they mean:** I hit/struck [body part] — 'me pegué en...' reports any blow or impact: head, knee, elbow, back. For head impacts, ask about dizziness, vomiting and blackouts.

Roots: Pegar is one of Spanish's hardest-working verbs: to hit, to stick, to glue, to catch on. Its origin is probably Latin picare, to smear with pitch — from sticking to striking is a short road. 'Me pegué en la cabeza' simply reports an impact, and patients use it for everything from a door frame to a car crash. The clinician's job is to scale the event: what hit what, how hard, and — for the head — what happened in the minutes after.
Literal: "I struck-myself in the head" — pegarse covers every kind of bang and bump.
Connects: Me caí (#27) is the usual setup. After any head impact, ask about mareos (#39) and vision before anything else.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Se sintió mareado, con náuseas, o perdió el conocimiento en algún momento después del golpe?» *(Did you feel dizzy, nauseous, or lose consciousness at any moment after the blow?)*

1. —Me pegué en la cabeza con el marco de la puerta. *(I hit my head on the door frame.)*
2. —Me pegué en la cabeza al caerme, pero no me desmayé. *(I hit my head when I fell, but I didn't pass out.)*
3. —¿Se pegó en alguna parte? —Sí, en la cabeza y en el hombro. *(Did you hit yourself anywhere? —Yes, on my head and my shoulder.)*
4. —Me pegué en la rodilla con la mesa. *(I hit my knee on the table.)*
5. —Se cayó una caja y me pegué en la espalda. *(A box fell and hit me on the back.)*
6. —Me pegué en la cabeza ayer y hoy me duele el cuello. *(I hit my head yesterday and today my neck hurts.)*
7. —El golpe fue aquí, donde tengo el chipote. *(The blow was here, where I have the bump.)*

30 · «Cargué algo pesado»

Literal: I carried something heavy — **What they mean:** The classic lifting injury story — boxes, water jugs (garrafones), cement bags, grandchildren. The weight and the one-person lift are the details to draw out.

Roots: Cargar is to load or carry, from a Late Latin word for loading a cart — carricare, from carrus, a wagon, which also gives English 'car', 'cargo' and 'charge'. The patient who 'cargué algo pesado' is describing a load their spine was asked to carry, and Mexican daily life supplies the loads: garrafones of water, gas tanks, sacks of cement. Ask what, how heavy, how far, and whether help was there — the story is the mechanism.
Literal: "I loaded something heavy" — the body as a beast of burden for one lift too many.
Connects: Me tronó la espalda (#14) is the sound this lift often produces; me duele la cintura (#25) is where it lands.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Qué fue lo que cargó, más o menos cuánto pesaba, y lo cargó usted solo?» *(What did you lift, more or less how heavy was it, and did you lift it alone?)*

1. —Cargué algo pesado en el trabajo y me empezó a doler la espalda. *(I lifted something heavy at work and my back started hurting.)*
2. —Cargué un garrafón de agua y sentí el jalón. *(I lifted a water jug and felt the pull.)*
3. —¿Qué estaba haciendo? —Cargué una caja muy pesada yo solo. *(What were you doing? —I lifted a very heavy box by myself.)*
4. —Cargué a mi nieto y me dolió la cintura. *(I lifted my grandson and my waist hurt.)*
5. —Siempre cargo cosas pesadas, pero esta vez me tronó la espalda. *(I always lift heavy things, but this time my back cracked.)*
6. —Cargué bultos de cemento todo el fin de semana. *(I lifted cement bags all weekend.)*
7. —Cargué algo pesado entre dos y aun así me lastimé. *(I lifted something heavy between two of us and still hurt myself.)*

31 · «Me resbalé»

Literal: I slipped myself — **What they mean:** I slipped — on wet floors, in the shower, on stairs. Sometimes the patient fell; sometimes they caught themselves and wrenched something doing it.

Roots: Resbalar is to slip or slide — likely an old sound-and-motion word, and it gives the adjective resbaloso, slippery. Notice the two versions of the event: 'me resbalé y me caí', and 'me resbalé pero me agarré' — I slipped but caught myself. The second is easy to under-rate, yet the violent twist of saving yourself is a classic back injury. Always ask which version happened; the patient may not volunteer that they never actually fell.
Literal: "I slipped-myself" — the near-fall can injure as much as the fall.
Connects: Me caí (#27) usually follows in the same breath; me torcí el tobillo (#28) is the frequent injury at the end of the slip.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Se cayó al suelo o se alcanzó a agarrar? A veces agarrarse lastima más la espalda.» *(Did you fall to the ground, or did you catch yourself? Sometimes catching yourself hurts the back more.)*

1. —Me resbalé en la regadera y me caí de lado. *(I slipped in the shower and fell on my side.)*
2. —Me resbalé en un piso mojado en la tienda. *(I slipped on a wet floor at the store.)*
3. —¿Se cayó? —Casi; me resbalé pero me alcancé a agarrar. *(Did you fall? —I almost did; I slipped but caught myself.)*
4. —Me resbalé y me torcí el tobillo. *(I slipped and twisted my ankle.)*
5. —Se me resbaló el pie bajando las escaleras mojadas. *(My foot slipped going down the wet stairs.)*
6. —Me resbalé en el trabajo y me lastimé la espalda. *(I slipped at work and hurt my back.)*
7. —Desde que me resbalé, me duele la cadera. *(Since I slipped, my hip hurts.)*

32 · «Me lastimé trabajando»

Literal: I injured myself working — **What they mean:** A work injury, stated plainly. Behind the phrase there is often paperwork, a boss, lost wages and fear — listen for all of it.

Roots: Lastimar is to injure or hurt — its origin is debated, possibly from a blend involving Latin laesus, wounded, the root of English 'lesion'. 'Me lastimé trabajando' compresses an entire world into three words: the event, the workplace, and often an unspoken worry about reporting, pay and job security. Some patients add 'pero no lo reporté' — I didn't report it. That detail matters for their options, so ask gently whether the injury is documented anywhere.
Literal: "I injured-myself working" — three words carrying a job, a boss and a paycheque.
Connects: ¿Puedo seguir trabajando? (#65) is the question this patient will ask before leaving; me caí (#27) is its acute version.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuénteme qué pasó en el trabajo, y también: ¿qué le exige su trabajo al cuerpo cada día?» *(Tell me what happened at work, and also: what does your job ask of your body each day?)*

1. —Me lastimé trabajando, cargando mercancía. *(I hurt myself working, lifting merchandise.)*
2. —Me lastimé el hombro en el trabajo hace meses y nunca mejoré. *(I hurt my shoulder at work months ago and it never got better.)*
3. —¿Fue en el trabajo? —Sí, me lastimé con la máquina. *(Was it at work? —Yes, I hurt myself with the machine.)*
4. —Me lastimé trabajando en el campo, bajo el sol. *(I hurt myself working in the field, under the sun.)*
5. —Desde que me lastimé, mi patrón me dio trabajo más ligero. *(Since I hurt myself, my boss gave me lighter work.)*
6. —Me lastimé la espalda trabajando y tengo miedo de perder el trabajo. *(I hurt my back working and I'm afraid of losing my job.)*
7. —Me lastimé trabajando, pero no lo reporté. *(I hurt myself working, but I didn't report it.)*

33 · «Me corté»

Literal: I cut myself — **What they mean:** A cut or laceration — kitchen knives, tools, sheet metal. If recent, ask about stitches, bleeding and tetanus; if old, why it still hurts.

Roots: Cortar is Latin curtare, to shorten or cut short — English 'curtail' is its cousin. 'Me corté' is the everyday report of any cut, and in a musculoskeletal clinic it usually matters for what surrounds it: the fall that came with it, the hand that now will not grip, the wound that healed tight over a joint. The useful follow-ups are plain: when, with what, was it cleaned and closed, and what can the hand or leg no longer do?
Literal: "I cut-myself" — one verb for every blade in daily life.
Connects: Me pegué en la cabeza (#29) covers blunt impact; this one and me quemé (#34) cover the sharp and hot injuries of kitchens and workshops.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Cuándo se cortó, y alguien le revisó la herida o se la cerraron con puntos?» *(When did you cut yourself, and did anyone look at the wound or close it with stitches?)*

1. —Me corté con un cuchillo en la cocina y me pusieron puntos. *(I cut myself with a knife in the kitchen and got stitches.)*
2. —Me corté la mano en el trabajo con una lámina. *(I cut my hand at work with a piece of sheet metal.)*
3. —¿Se lastimó? —Me corté un dedo, nada profundo. *(Did you hurt yourself? —I cut my finger, nothing deep.)*
4. —Me corté hace una semana y todavía me duele la herida. *(I cut myself a week ago and the wound still hurts.)*
5. —Me corté la pierna y por eso cojeo un poco. *(I cut my leg and that's why I limp.)*
6. —Me corté afeitándome, no es por eso que vine. *(I cut myself shaving, that's not why I came.)*
7. —Cuando me corté, se me hinchó la mano después. *(When I cut myself, my hand swelled up afterward.)*

34 · «Me quemé»

Literal: I burned myself — **What they mean:** A burn — cooking oil, irons, hot water, sun, or a heating pad left on too long. Ask about blistering and whether the skin broke.

Roots: Quemar, to burn, probably comes from Latin cremare — English 'cremate' — reshaped over centuries. Patients use quemarse for kitchen burns, sunburn and the quiet iatrogenic one: the hot compress or heating pad applied too long to a sore back, which arrives as a new injury layered on the old pain. The key questions are depth and skin integrity, and one caution you may need to give kindly: more heat is not always better for a painful back.
Literal: "I burned-myself" — the same verb serves the stove, the sun and the heating pad.
Connects: Me corté (#33) is the other kitchen-and-workshop injury; me arde (#2) is how the patient may describe it days later.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Déjeme ver la quemadura. ¿La piel se ampolló o se abrió, o quedó superficial?» *(Let me see the burn. Did the skin blister or break, or did it stay on the surface?)*

1. —Me quemé con aceite caliente en la cocina. *(I burned myself with hot oil in the kitchen.)*
2. —Me quemé el brazo en el trabajo y todavía me duele. *(I burned my arm at work and it still hurts.)*
3. —¿Qué le pasó en la mano? —Me quemé la semana pasada. *(Did something happen to your hand? —I burned myself last week.)*
4. —Me quemé poquito, nada más la piel. *(I burned myself a little, just the skin.)*
5. —Desde que me quemé, no puedo cerrar bien la mano. *(Since I burned myself, I can't fully close my hand.)*
6. —Me quemé con la plancha y me quedó una marca. *(I burned myself with the iron and it left a mark.)*
7. —Me quemé la espalda con una compresa caliente que dejé mucho tiempo. *(I burned my back with a heating pad I left on too long.)*

35 · «Se me dobló la rodilla»

Literal: My knee folded itself on me — **What they mean:** The knee gave way or buckled — instability the patient feels as the knee 'folding'. A giving-way knee deserves careful ligament and strength questions.

Roots: Doblar is to fold or double, from Latin duplare, to make double — English 'double' itself. A rodilla that 'se dobla' folds like a hinge closing the wrong way, and the 'se me' frame again marks it as involuntary: it happened to me. Giving way is a symptom patients report with real fear — of stairs, of falling, of work at height. Pin down the pattern: with turning, with fatigue, with pain, or out of nowhere.
Literal: "The knee folded-itself on-me" — a hinge closing against its owner's will.
Connects: Me torcí el tobillo (#28) is the same event at the ankle; me quedé trabado (#21) is the back's version of a joint that will not move right.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Se le dobla la rodilla sin aviso, o cuando gira o baja escaleras?» *(Does your knee buckle without warning, or when you turn or go down stairs?)*

1. —Se me dobló la rodilla bajando las escaleras. *(My knee buckled going down the stairs.)*
2. —Siento que se me dobla la rodilla al caminar. *(I feel like my knee gives way when I walk.)*
3. —¿Se le dobla la rodilla? —Sí, se me ha doblado dos veces. *(Does your knee buckle? —Yes, it has buckled on me twice.)*
4. —Se me dobló la rodilla y casi me caigo. *(My knee buckled and I almost fell.)*
5. —Desde que se me dobló la rodilla, me da miedo bajar escaleras. *(Since my knee buckled, I'm afraid to go down stairs.)*
6. —Me torcí la rodilla y ahora se me dobla. *(I twisted my knee and now it buckles on me.)*
7. —Se me dobla la rodilla cuando me canso en el trabajo. *(My knee buckles when I get tired at work.)*

36 · «Me cayó algo encima»

Literal: Something fell on top of me — **What they mean:** A falling-object injury — tools, boxes, branches, shelves. Ask what fell, from how high, and what it struck.

Roots: Encima is en plus cima, the top or summit — 'on top'. The phrase builds a small scene: something above, then gravity, then the patient underneath. Warehouses, construction and kitchens supply the objects. Mechanism questions do the clinical work here — mass, height, and point of impact — and one more: whether the patient was knocked down or struck the head, which moves the event into a different category of care.
Literal: "Something fell on-top-of me" — gravity as the assailant.
Connects: Me pegué en la cabeza (#29) is often the next clause in this story; me caí (#27) is its ground-level equivalent.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Qué le cayó encima y de qué altura? ¿Le pegó en la cabeza o en la espalda directamente?» *(What fell on you, and from what height? Did it hit your head or your back directly?)*

1. —Me cayó algo encima en el trabajo, una caja de arriba. *(Something fell on me at work, a box from up high.)*
2. —Me cayó una herramienta en el pie. *(A tool fell on my foot.)*
3. —¿Qué pasó? —Me cayó una tabla en el hombro. *(What happened? —A board fell on my shoulder.)*
4. —Me cayó una rama encima en el jardín. *(A branch fell on me in the garden.)*
5. —Se cayó el estante y todo me cayó en la espalda. *(The shelf fell and everything landed on my back.)*
6. —Me cayó algo encima, pero ligero, no me quebró nada. *(Something fell on me, but light, it didn't break anything.)*
7. —Desde que me cayó la olla en la mano, no muevo bien el dedo. *(Since the pot fell on my hand, my finger doesn't move well.)*

37 · «Tuve un accidente en el carro»

Literal: I had an accident in the car — **What they mean:** A motor-vehicle collision — rear-end, side impact, motorcycle. Delayed neck and back pain is the classic presentation; ask about the hospital visit and what was checked.

Roots: Accidente is Latin accidens, that which falls upon or happens — from cadere, to fall, the same root as caer (#27). Patients often minimize: 'un accidente leve', a light one. Your questions, not their adjective, establish the mechanism — direction of impact, speed, airbags, hospital checks, and the classic delayed onset: 'me empezó a doler días después'. Document their story carefully; collisions generate paperwork long after the pain fades.
Literal: "I had an accident in the car" — 'leve' (light) is the patient's word; your questions decide the weight.
Connects: Me pegué en la cabeza (#29) and ando mareado (#39) are the details to draw out after any crash; ¿es grave? (#63) is what the family asks.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuénteme cómo fue el choque: ¿por detrás, de lado? ¿Y lo revisaron en un hospital ese día?» *(Tell me how the crash was: from behind, from the side? And were you checked at a hospital that day?)*

1. —Tuve un accidente en el carro hace dos semanas. *(I had a car accident two weeks ago.)*
2. —Nos pegaron por detrás y el cuello me empezó a doler días después. *(A car hit us from behind and my neck started hurting days later.)*
3. —¿Tuvo un accidente? —Sí, uno leve, pero me quedó la espalda adolorida. *(Were you in an accident? —Yes, a small one, but my back is sore.)*
4. —Desde el accidente me dan dolores de cabeza. *(Since the accident I get headaches.)*
5. —Yo iba manejando y se abrió la bolsa de aire. *(I was the driver and the airbag went off.)*
6. —Tuve el accidente en moto, me caí de lado. *(I had the accident on a motorcycle, I fell to one side.)*
7. —Me llevaron al hospital después del accidente y dijeron que no había nada quebrado. *(They took me to the hospital after the accident and said nothing was broken.)*

38 · «Me jalé un músculo»

Literal: I pulled a muscle on myself — **What they mean:** A muscle pull or strain — the patient felt a tug ('un jalón') at a specific moment. Often the clearest mechanism story you'll get all day.

Roots: Jalar is to pull or haul — likely from an old nautical word for hauling ropes, and in Mexican Spanish it also means simply 'to work' (¿dónde jalas? — where do you work?). A jalón is a yank, and 'me jalé un músculo' is the patient's strain diagnosis, usually with a precise moment attached: turning, lifting, reaching. That precision is a gift — a strain story with a timestamp and a movement is half your mechanism history already told.
Literal: "I yanked a muscle" — jalar is stronger than 'pull': a tug with a snap to it.
Connects: Me quedé trabado (#21) is the back version of a pull that locks you up; siento la espalda pesada (#22) is the milder, end-of-day form.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Dónde sintió el jalón, y qué movimiento estaba haciendo en ese momento?» *(Where did you feel the pull, and what movement were you making at that exact moment?)*

1. —Me jalé un músculo de la espalda cargando a mi hijo. *(I pulled a muscle in my back picking up my son.)*
2. —Sentí el jalón cuando me volteé de repente. *(I felt the pull when I turned suddenly.)*
3. —¿Se lastimó? —Creo que me jalé un músculo del cuello. *(Did you hurt yourself? —I think I pulled a muscle in my neck.)*
4. —Me jalé un músculo de la pierna jugando con mis hijos. *(I pulled a muscle in my leg playing with my kids.)*
5. —El jalón me duele cuando me estiro. *(The pull hurts when I stretch.)*
6. —Me jalé un músculo en el gimnasio levantando pesas. *(I pulled a muscle at the gym lifting weights.)*
7. —Fue un jalón, y desde entonces siento el músculo apretado. *(It was a pull, and since then I feel the muscle is tight.)*

Chapter 4

General Symptoms · Síntomas generales

Phrases 39–50

39 · «Ando mareado»

Literal: I go around dizzy/seasick — **What they mean:** Dizziness — spinning, lightheadedness, or unsteadiness; patients use one word for all of them. Sort out which: '¿como que todo da vueltas, o como que se va a desmayar?'

Roots: Mareo comes from mar, the sea — Latin mare — so a mareado patient is literally 'seasick' on dry land. Spanish uses this one word for vertigo, lightheadedness, nausea-tinged wooziness and carsickness, which makes it a phrase that demands a follow-up, not a chart entry. The sorting question is simple and kind: does the room spin, or do you feel faint? After head injuries, dizziness is also a detail to take seriously and document.
Literal: "I go-around seasick" — dizziness borrowed from the vocabulary of boats.
Connects: Me pegué en la cabeza (#29) is the history item that pairs with it; me falta el aire (#40) alongside mareo deserves prompt, careful screening.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuénteme cómo es el mareo: ¿todo le da vueltas, o siente que se va a desmayar?» *(Tell me what the dizziness is like: does everything spin, or do you feel like you might faint?)*

1. —Ando mareado, doctor, sobre todo cuando me levanto. *(I've been dizzy, doctor, especially when I get up.)*
2. —Me mareo cuando giro la cabeza rápido. *(I get dizzy when I turn my head quickly.)*
3. —¿Se siente mareado? —Sí, como que todo me da vueltas. *(Do you feel dizzy? —Yes, like everything is spinning.)*
4. —Ando mareado desde el accidente. *(I've been dizzy since the accident.)*
5. —Me mareo y también me dan náuseas. *(I get dizzy and also nauseous.)*
6. —El mareo me dura unos segundos y se me quita. *(The dizziness lasts a few seconds and goes away.)*
7. —Me da miedo manejar porque me mareo. *(I'm afraid to drive because I get dizzy.)*

40 · «Me falta el aire»

Literal: The air is lacking to me — **What they mean:** Shortness of breath. Always a screening priority — new or unexplained breathlessness is not a musculoskeletal complaint until proven otherwise.

Roots: Faltar is to be missing or lacking — probably from a Latin root of failing or falling short. 'Me falta el aire' frames breath as a supply that runs out. In a chiropractic office this phrase should change the temperature of the room: breathlessness with exertion is one thing; breathlessness at rest, lying flat, or with chest pain belongs to urgent medical assessment, and your model reply shows the tone — stop, focus, and clarify before any treatment conversation.
Literal: "The air lacks-me" — breath described as a supply running short.
Connects: Me duele al respirar (#6) is the pain version; this is the breathlessness version, and it outranks everything else in the visit.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Necesito entender esto bien. ¿La falta de aire le pasa en reposo o solo con el esfuerzo?» *(I need to understand this well. Does the shortness of breath happen at rest, or only with effort?)*

1. —Me falta el aire cuando subo escaleras. *(I get short of breath when I climb stairs.)*
2. —En la noche siento que me falta el aire acostado. *(At night I feel short of breath lying down.)*
3. —¿Le falta el aire? —Nada más cuando hago esfuerzo. *(Do you get short of breath? —Only when I exert myself.)*
4. —Desde la caída siento que me falta el aire. *(Since I fell, I feel short of breath.)*
5. —Me falta el aire y me duele el pecho. *(I get short of breath and my chest hurts.)*
6. —Antes subía la loma bien; ahora me falta el aire. *(Before, I climbed the hill fine; now I get short of breath.)*
7. —Me falta el aire hasta hablando mucho. *(I get short of breath even talking a lot.)*

41 · «Me siento débil»

Literal: I feel myself weak — **What they mean:** Weakness — either a whole-body tired weakness or a specific limb that won't work. The distinction matters: dropping things and a leg that gives out deserve careful neurological questions.

Roots: Débil is Latin debilis, weak or feeble — English 'debilitate' is the same word grown formal. Patients use débil for two different findings: the flat, whole-body weakness of poor sleep and hard weeks, and the focal weakness of a hand that drops cups. Spanish gives you one word; your follow-up question must do the separating. Whenever weakness is focal, slow down and examine deliberately — grip, lift, gait — before treating.
Literal: "I feel-myself weak" — one word covering tiredness and true loss of strength; your questions split them.
Connects: Se me durmió el brazo (#18) is weakness's local cousin; ¿esto es de la edad? (#73) is the explanation older patients offer for both.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿La debilidad es en todo el cuerpo, como cansancio, o en una mano o pierna en particular?» *(Is the weakness in your whole body, like tiredness, or in one hand or leg in particular?)*

1. —Me siento débil, como sin fuerza en los brazos. *(I feel weak, like I have no strength in my arms.)*
2. —Siento débil la mano derecha, se me caen las cosas. *(My right hand feels weak, I drop things.)*
3. —¿Se siente débil de alguna parte? —De la pierna, al subir escaleras. *(Do you feel weak anywhere? —In my leg, when I climb stairs.)*
4. —Me siento débil de todo desde que duermo mal. *(I feel weak all over since I've been sleeping badly.)*
5. —Siento la mano débil y también tengo hormigueo. *(My hand feels weak and I also have tingling.)*
6. —Antes abría los frascos; ahora me siento débil. *(Before I could open jars; now I feel weak.)*
7. —Me siento débil, pero el dolor es lo que más me preocupa. *(I feel weak, but the pain is what worries me most.)*

42 · «No dormí nada»

Literal: I didn't sleep nothing — **What they mean:** Sleeplessness, usually pain-driven. Spanish's double negative is correct grammar here. Sleep loss is both a symptom and an amplifier of pain — always ask about it.

Roots: Dormir again, Latin dormire. The sentence carries a grammar gift for English speakers: 'no dormí nada' — literally 'I didn't sleep nothing' — is not an error; Spanish negation works by agreement, and the doubled negative is standard and emphatic. Clinically, the phrase matters because pain and sleep chase each other: pain ruins sleep, and ruined sleep lowers pain tolerance. Patients report it as context; chart it as a finding.
Literal: "I didn't sleep nothing" — the double negative is emphasis, and correct Spanish.
Connects: Me duele más en la noche (#11) is frequently the first half of this sentence; ando sin energía (#50) is its daytime consequence.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Qué lo despierta: el dolor mismo, o no encontrar una posición cómoda?» *(What wakes you: the pain itself, or not finding a comfortable position?)*

1. —No dormí nada, el dolor no me dejó. *(I didn't sleep at all, the pain wouldn't let me.)*
2. —No he dormido bien en dos semanas por el cuello. *(I haven't slept well for two weeks because of my neck.)*
3. —¿Cómo duerme? —Mal, anoche no dormí nada. *(How do you sleep? —Badly, I didn't sleep at all last night.)*
4. —No dormí nada y hoy apenas puedo trabajar. *(I didn't sleep at all and today I can barely work.)*
5. —Me despierto a las tres y ya no puedo dormirme. *(I wake up at three and can't get back to sleep.)*
6. —La noche del accidente no dormí nada. *(I didn't sleep at all the night after the accident.)*
7. —Duermo por pedazos, una hora aquí, una hora allá. *(I sleep in pieces, an hour here, an hour there.)*

43 · «Ando con náuseas»

Literal: I go around with nauseas — **What they mean:** Nausea — with dizziness, with neck pain, after head injury, or from medication. Patients say 'ando con náuseas' or 'me dan náuseas'.

Roots: Náusea is Greek nausia, seasickness, from naus, a ship — English 'nausea' and 'nautical' share that ship. Between mareo (#39) and náuseas, Spanish describes the whole miserable cluster of dizziness and stomach unrest with sea language, even in the mountains. In the clinic the pairing to listen for is náuseas plus headache plus a head injury — a combination that changes your plan — and náuseas plus a new medication, which changes a different plan.
Literal: "I go-around with nauseas" — náusea is Greek seasickness, cousin to 'nautical'.
Connects: Ando mareado (#39) is its constant companion — the two arrive together so often they function as one phrase.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Las náuseas vienen con el mareo, o después de tomar alguna medicina?» *(Does the nausea come with the dizziness, or after taking any medicine?)*

1. —Ando con náuseas desde la mañana. *(I've been nauseous since this morning.)*
2. —Me dan náuseas cuando el dolor de cuello es fuerte. *(I get nauseous when the neck pain is strong.)*
3. —¿Tiene náuseas? —Un poco, con el mareo. *(Do you have nausea? —A little, with the dizziness.)*
4. —Ando con náuseas y no tengo ganas de comer. *(I've been nauseous and I don't feel like eating.)*
5. —Las pastillas que tomé me dieron náuseas. *(The pills I took gave me nausea.)*
6. —Me dan náuseas en el carro desde el accidente. *(I get nauseous in the car since the accident.)*
7. —Traigo náuseas, pero no he vomitado. *(I'm nauseous, but I haven't vomited.)*

44 · «Me duele todo el cuerpo»

Literal: My whole body hurts me — **What they mean:** Generalized aching — everything hurts. Contrast with the pointing phrases: this patient cannot localize, which is itself information.

Roots: Cuerpo is Latin corpus — English 'corpse', 'corporation' and 'corps' all carry it. 'Todo el cuerpo' is the opposite pole from 'me duele aquí' (#1): pain with no address. Sometimes it is a hard week's honest report; sometimes it is how widespread pain announces itself. The gentle sorting move is ranking, not dismissal — ask for the worst place, then the next. Patients who feel believed about the whole map will help you read its details.
Literal: "The whole body hurts-me" — the map with no single X on it.
Connects: Ando todo contracturado (#15) is this phrase's focused form; me siento débil (#41) often joins it in the same breath.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Si tuviera que escoger el lugar que más le molesta, ¿cuál sería?» *(If you had to choose the place that bothers you most, where would it be?)*

1. —Me duele todo el cuerpo, doctor, hasta los brazos. *(My whole body hurts, doctor, even my arms.)*
2. —Amanecí y me dolía todo el cuerpo, como si me hubieran golpeado. *(I woke up and my whole body hurt, like I had been beaten.)*
3. —¿Le duele algo en particular? —No, me duele todo el cuerpo. *(Does something specific hurt? —No, my whole body hurts.)*
4. —Después de la jornada me duele todo el cuerpo. *(After the workday my whole body hurts.)*
5. —Me duele todo el cuerpo y además me siento muy cansado. *(My whole body hurts and I also feel very tired.)*
6. —Cuando cambia el clima, me duele todo el cuerpo. *(When the weather changes, my whole body hurts.)*
7. —No es un lugar, me duele todo el cuerpo desde la caída. *(It's not one place, my whole body hurts since the fall.)*

45 · «Tengo fiebre»

Literal: I have fever — **What they mean:** Fever. With musculoskeletal complaints, fever is a screening flag — ask about its pattern, other symptoms, and how long it has lasted.

Roots: Fiebre is Latin febris — English 'febrile' and February's old association with purification both trace back to it. Patients report fever in two styles: measured ('me la medí, 38') and felt ('me siento caliente'). Both deserve the same respect and the same follow-ups, because fever next to back pain is one of the classic combinations a chiropractor must not simply treat through. Ask the pattern, ask the company it keeps, and know your referral threshold.
Literal: "I have fever" — patients may say 'traigo fiebre', I carry fever, like a passenger.
Connects: Me duele todo el cuerpo (#44) frequently accompanies it; the timeline — how many days — is the detail to pin down.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Cuántos días lleva con fiebre, y ha tenido otros síntomas con ella, como tos o ardor al orinar?» *(How many days have you had the fever, and have you had other symptoms with it, like cough or pain when urinating?)*

1. —Tengo fiebre desde ayer, poca pero constante. *(I have a fever since yesterday, low but constant.)*
2. —Anoche tuve fiebre y me dolía el cuerpo. *(Last night I had a fever and my body hurt.)*
3. —¿Ha tenido fiebre? —Sí, me la medí, 38 grados. *(Have you had a fever? —Yes, I measured it, 38 degrees.)*
4. —Me da fiebre en las tardes. *(I get a fever in the afternoons.)*
5. —Traigo fiebre y por eso casi no vengo. *(I have a fever and that's why I almost didn't come.)*
6. —La fiebre se me quita con la pastilla y me vuelve. *(The fever goes away with the pill and comes back.)*
7. —No sé si tengo fiebre, me siento caliente. *(I don't know if I have a fever, I feel hot.)*

46 · «Ando estreñido»

Literal: I go around constipated/tightened — **What they mean:** Constipation. Patients connect it themselves to pain medication, inactivity, and low back discomfort — it belongs in a whole-person history.

Roots: Estreñido comes from estreñir, to tighten or constrict, from Latin stringere — English 'stringent' and 'restrict'. Beware the false friend: in Mexican Spanish 'constipado' usually means stuffed up with a head cold, not constipated. Patients volunteer estreñimiento because their bodies are one system to them: pain pills slow the gut, the sore back slows the walking, and the waist hurts more. Hear it as whole-person information, and as a prompt to review what they are taking.
Literal: "I go-around tightened" — estreñido and constipado are not the same word in Mexico: one is the bowel, the other a head cold.
Connects: Tomo té de manzanilla (#56) is a folk remedy aimed at this complaint; the bridge in your reply matters more than the herb.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Eso pasa mucho con el dolor y el menor movimiento. ¿Cuántos días lleva así, y está tomando algo para el dolor?» *(That often happens with pain and less movement. How many days has it been, and are you taking anything for the pain?)*

1. —Ando estreñido desde que dejé de trabajar por la espalda. *(I've been constipated since I stopped working because of my back.)*
2. —Las pastillas para el dolor me estriñen. *(The pain pills make me constipated.)*
3. —¿Cómo anda de la digestión? —Estreñido, ya son días. *(How is your digestion? —Constipated, it's been days.)*
4. —Ando estreñido y me duele más la cintura. *(I've been constipated and my waist hurts more.)*
5. —Desde que me muevo menos, ando estreñido. *(Since I move less, I've been constipated.)*
6. —Me estriño cuando viajo. *(I get constipated when I travel.)*
7. —Ando estreñido, pero no tomo nada para eso. *(I've been constipated, but I don't take anything for it.)*

47 · «Me siento inflamado»

Literal: I feel myself inflamed — **What they mean:** Feeling swollen or bloated — in the belly (gas, digestion) or in an injured area. Patients use inflamado and hinchado almost interchangeably; location sorts it out.

Roots: Inflamado carries Latin inflammare — in plus flamma, flame — so inflammation is, in the old picture, tissue set alight; English 'inflame' is the same word. Spanish everyday speech splits swelling two ways: hinchado for visible puffiness, inflamado for the felt sense of it, including a bloated belly full of 'aire'. That double life makes location your first question. A patient who points at the stomach is telling a digestive story; one who points at the injury is not.
Literal: "I feel-myself inflamed" — flame language again: inflamación holds Latin flamma, flame.
Connects: Me siento la espalda pesada (#22) is the back's version; se me hinchan los pies (#48) is the visible one the patient will show you.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Dónde siente la inflamación: en la panza o en la zona que le duele?» *(Where do you feel the swelling: in your stomach, or in the area that hurts?)*

1. —Me siento inflamado, como lleno de aire. *(I feel bloated, like full of air.)*
2. —Después de comer me siento inflamado y me duele la cintura. *(After eating, I feel bloated and my waist hurts.)*
3. —¿Se siente hinchado? —Inflamado de la panza, sí. *(Do you feel swollen? —Bloated in my stomach, yes.)*
4. —Siento inflamadas las manos en las mañanas. *(I feel my hands are swollen in the mornings.)*
5. —Desde el golpe, siento inflamada la zona. *(Since the blow, I feel the area is swollen.)*
6. —Me siento inflamado aunque no coma mucho. *(I feel bloated even without eating much.)*
7. —La inflamación me molesta más que el dolor. *(The bloating bothers me more than the pain.)*

48 · «Se me hinchan los pies»

Literal: My feet swell themselves on me — **What they mean:** Visible swelling — feet, ankles, hands. One-sided swelling after an injury is a local finding; both feet swelling daily is a general one. Look at what they show you.

Roots: Hinchar is Latin inflare, to blow into — the same infl- family as inflamado (#47), pictured from the outside: a balloon filling. 'Se me hinchan' keeps the involuntary frame; the feet do it on their own by evening. Patients prove it with evidence — tight shoes, ring marks, sock lines. Symmetry is the sorting question you can ask in one breath, and pitting versus injury swelling is the observation your hands add to their report.
Literal: "The feet swell-themselves on-me" — hinchar is to inflate, like a balloon filling.
Connects: Me siento inflamado (#47) is the feeling; this is the showing. Both deserve a look, not just a note.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Déjeme verlos. ¿Son los dos pies por igual, o uno más que el otro?» *(Let me look at them. Is it both feet equally, or one more than the other?)*

1. —Se me hinchan los pies al final del día. *(My feet swell by the end of the day.)*
2. —Desde el accidente se me hincha el tobillo. *(Since the accident, my ankle swells.)*
3. —¿Se le hinchan los pies? —Sí, me aprietan los zapatos. *(Do your feet swell? —Yes, my shoes feel tight on me.)*
4. —Se me hinchan los pies estando parado en el trabajo. *(My feet swell when I'm standing at work.)*
5. —Se me hincha más un pie que el otro. *(One foot swells more than the other.)*
6. —En la mañana están bien y en la noche están hinchados. *(In the morning they're fine and at night they're swollen.)*
7. —También se me hinchan las manos, no me quedan los anillos. *(My hands swell too, the rings don't fit.)*

49 · «Me dan muchos dolores de cabeza»

Literal: Many head-pains give themselves to me — **What they mean:** Frequent headaches. Patients will often connect them to the neck themselves ('me empieza en el cuello') — and after trauma, headaches are a screening item, not a footnote.

Roots: Cabeza descends from Latin capitia, from caput, head — English 'capital' and 'captain' share it. The pattern is the now-familiar 'me dan': headaches 'give themselves' to the patient, arriving like weather. Frequency is the word to seize on — 'muchos' and 'casi todos los días' turn a symptom into a pattern worth charting. And note the headache that starts in the neck and climbs (#17's rising pain): patients map cervicogenic patterns without knowing the term.
Literal: "Headaches give-themselves to me, many" — the me dan frame again: symptoms as visitors who arrive.
Connects: Tengo el cuello tieso (#19) is the mechanism patients most often blame; tengo miedo (#67) sometimes hides behind frequent headaches.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Dónde empieza el dolor de cabeza, y cuántos días por semana le viene?» *(Where does the headache start, and how many days a week does it come?)*

1. —Me dan muchos dolores de cabeza, casi todos los días. *(I get a lot of headaches, almost every day.)*
2. —El dolor de cabeza me empieza en el cuello y se me sube. *(The headache starts in my neck and goes up.)*
3. —¿Le dan dolores de cabeza? —Sí, desde el accidente, muchos. *(Do you get headaches? —Yes, since the accident, many.)*
4. —Me dan dolores de cabeza en las tardes, por la computadora. *(I get headaches in the afternoons, from the computer.)*
5. —Cuando ando contracturado del cuello, me da dolor de cabeza. *(When my neck is knotted up, I get a headache.)*
6. —Me dan dolores de cabeza con mareo a veces. *(I get headaches with dizziness sometimes.)*
7. —El dolor de cabeza me despierta en la noche. *(The headache wakes me up at night.)*

50 · «Ando sin energía»

Literal: I go around without energy — **What they mean:** Fatigue — no energy, worn out ('agotado'). Usually reported as part of the pain-sleep-mood circle, and patients often name the circle themselves.

Roots: Energía is Greek energeia, activity or work within, arriving through Latin — English 'energy' is the identical word. 'Ando sin energía' is the summary sentence of the chronic-pain circle: pain, broken sleep, low mood, no energy, more pain. Patients frequently diagnose the circle themselves — 'es un círculo' — and hearing that is an invitation to treat the whole loop within your scope and to ask, kindly, how their spirits are doing alongside the mechanics.
Literal: "I go-around without energy" — agotado, the other common word, means emptied out, like a drained tank.
Connects: No dormí nada (#42) is its most common cause in the patient's own account; me siento débil (#41) is its physical twin.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Desde cuándo se siente sin energía? Mucha gente nota que viene junto con el dolor y el mal sueño.» *(Since when do you feel without energy? Many people notice it comes together with pain and poor sleep.)*

1. —Ando sin energía, me canso sin hacer nada. *(I've had no energy, I get tired doing nothing.)*
2. —Antes tenía energía para todo; ahora ando sin energía. *(Before I had energy for everything; now I have none.)*
3. —¿Cómo se siente en general? —Sin energía, agotado. *(How do you feel in general? —Without energy, worn out.)*
4. —Ando sin energía desde que empezó el dolor. *(I have no energy since the pain started.)*
5. —En las mañanas tengo algo de energía, en las tardes nada. *(In the mornings I have a little energy, in the afternoons none.)*
6. —Ando sin energía y duermo mal, es un círculo. *(I have no energy and I sleep badly, it's a circle.)*
7. —Mi familia dice que ya no tengo energía para nada. *(My family says I have no energy for anything anymore.)*

Chapter 5

Folk Ideas and Home Remedies · Ideas populares y remedios caseros

Phrases 51–62

51 · «Tengo un aire»

Literal: I have an air — **What they mean:** A folk diagnosis: trapped 'air' or wind inside the body causing stiffness and pain — often blamed on cold drafts after sweating or bathing. Respect the model; the stiffness underneath it is real.

Roots: This is humoral folk medicine, centuries old: the body as a vessel that wind, cold and heat can enter and disturb. An 'aire' gets in through a draft — stepping sweating into cold air, sleeping under a fan — and lodges in the neck or back as stiffness. The concept came with Spanish colonial medicine and mixed with indigenous ideas. Your patient is not being vague; they are naming a cause inside a coherent system. Receive it, examine the stiffness, and let your findings speak in both languages.
Literal: "I have an air" — pain explained as wind trapped where it does not belong.
Connects: Me siento inflamado (#47) is its clinical-adjacent cousin; se me subió el dolor (#17) shows the same folk physics — things inside the body move and lodge where they should not.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Mucha gente siente exactamente eso, como algo atorado por dentro. Vamos a revisar bien la zona para ver cómo están el músculo y las articulaciones.» *(Many people feel exactly that, like something stuck inside. Let's examine the area well to see how the muscle and the joints are moving.)*

1. —Doctor, creo que traigo un aire en la espalda. *(Doctor, I think I have an 'aire' in my back.)*
2. —Mi abuela dice que este dolor es un aire. *(My grandmother says this pain is an aire.)*
3. —Me entró un aire por el viento frío al salir de bañarme. *(I got an aire from the cold wind when I came out of the shower.)*
4. —¿Es muscular o es un aire? —Se siente como un aire, atorado aquí. *(Is it muscle or an aire? —It feels like an aire, stuck here.)*
5. —Me dan aires en el cuello cuando cambia el clima. *(I get aires in my neck when the weather changes.)*
6. —Me puse una ventosa para el aire y me ayudó un poco. *(I put a cupping glass on for the aire and it helped a little.)*
7. —El aire no me deja girar el cuello. *(The aire won't let me turn my neck.)*

52 · «Tengo empacho»

Literal: I have empacho (blocked digestion) — **What they mean:** A folk illness: food 'stuck' to the stomach, causing bloating, poor appetite and discomfort — classically in children, treated by abdominal massage and 'pulling the skin' of the back. Listen for what symptoms sit underneath.

Roots: Empacho is one of the classic folk illnesses of Mexico, described since colonial times: a bolus of food supposedly stuck to the stomach wall, especially in children who ate too much or at the wrong time. The traditional cure is the sobada — firm abdominal massage — and 'jalar el pellejo', pulling up the skin of the back until it pops. The word's own origin is uncertain, likely from a root of hindering or clogging. Clinically, translate the label into symptoms: bloating, appetite, pain, fever — and screen those.
Literal: "Empacho" — digestion pictured as food pasted to the stomach wall.
Connects: Me siento inflamado (#47) overlaps in the belly; tomo té de manzanilla (#56) is the standard home response patients pair with it.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuénteme qué siente exactamente: ¿inflamación, falta de apetito, dolor? Así vemos juntos qué está pasando.» *(Tell me what you feel exactly: bloating, no appetite, pain? That way we can see what's going on together.)*

1. —Mi niño tiene empacho, no quiere comer. *(My child has empacho, he doesn't want to eat.)*
2. —Dicen que lo que traigo es empacho, que se me pegó la comida. *(They say what I have is empacho, that the food stuck to me.)*
3. —¿Le ha pasado antes? —Sí, empacho, mi mamá me sobaba la panza. *(Have you had this before? —Yes, empacho, my mother used to rub my stomach.)*
4. —Comí mucho en la fiesta y me dio empacho. *(I ate too much at the party and I got empacho.)*
5. —Me jalaron el pellejo de la espalda para el empacho. *(They pulled the skin on my back for the empacho.)*
6. —El empacho me da la panza inflamada y sin ganas de comer. *(The empacho gives me a bloated stomach and no appetite.)*
7. —No sé si es empacho u otra cosa, por eso vine. *(I don't know if it's empacho or something else, that's why I came.)*

53 · «Me dio susto»

Literal: Fright gave itself to me — **What they mean:** Susto — a folk illness after a fright (accident, fall, near-miss), where the spirit is shaken loose; symptoms include poor sleep, nervousness, jumpiness. Often the patient's frame for post-traumatic stress.

Roots: Susto is the fright itself, and in folk medicine also the illness that follows it: the soul, startled, partly leaves the body, leaving nervousness, insomnia, listlessness and a body that will not settle. The concept is documented across Latin America and recognized in psychiatry as a cultural concept of distress. After car accidents, patients may explain their whole picture — pain, tension, bad sleep — as susto. The respectful clinician hears the symptoms inside the frame and takes both seriously.
Literal: "Fright gave-itself to me" — the scare as an event that stays living in the body.
Connects: Tengo miedo (#67) is the everyday emotion; susto is the culturally named illness. Dicer que es mal de ojo (#54) is its sibling explanation, especially for children.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Después de un susto así, es muy común que el cuerpo quede tenso y que el sueño se altere. Cuénteme cómo ha estado desde ese día.» *(After a fright like that, it's very common for the body to stay tense and for sleep to suffer. Tell me how you've been since that day.)*

1. —Dicen que me dio susto por el accidente, por eso no duermo. *(They say I got susto from the accident, that's why I don't sleep.)*
2. —El niño agarró susto cuando se cayó y ahora llora mucho. *(The child got susto when he fell and now he cries a lot.)*
3. —¿Le pasó algo? —Me dio susto, casi me muerde un perro. *(Did something happen? —I got susto, a dog almost bit me.)*
4. —Para el susto me hicieron una limpia con un huevo. *(For susto they did a limpia for me with an egg.)*
5. —Todavía traigo el susto en el cuerpo por el choque. *(I still have the susto in my body from the crash.)*
6. —Mi abuela dice que después de un susto hay que descansar. *(My grandmother says that after a susto you have to rest.)*
7. —No sé si es susto, pero ando nervioso desde ese día. *(I don't know if it's susto, but I've been nervous since that day.)*

54 · «Dicen que es mal de ojo»

Literal: They say it is the evil eye — **What they mean:** Mal de ojo — illness, usually in a baby or child, attributed to a strong gaze of admiration or envy. Protective red bracelets and egg limpias are the folk responses. Your role: respect, examine the child, screen the symptoms.

Roots: The evil eye is ancient Mediterranean folk medicine that crossed the Atlantic with Spain: a strong look — admiring, envious, 'hot' — falls on a child and the child falls ill: crying, fever, poor sleep. The red string bracelet and the egg limpia are its classic defences. Parents often hold both systems at once, as the last example shows: respect for the grandmother's frame and a clinic visit in the same sentence. Meet them exactly there — examine thoroughly, explain clearly, mock nothing.
Literal: "They say it is evil eye" — ojo from Latin oculus; the illness rides on the power of looking.
Connects: Me dio susto (#53) is the adult twin; me hicieron una limpia (#60) is the remedy most often paired with both.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Qué bueno que también lo trajo a revisión. Vamos a verlo con cuidado y platicamos de lo que encontremos.» *(It's good that you also brought him to be checked. Let's look at him carefully and talk about what we find.)*

1. —Dicen que el bebé tiene mal de ojo porque una señora lo miró mucho. *(They say the baby has mal de ojo because a lady looked at him a lot.)*
2. —Mi suegra dice que es mal de ojo, que necesita una limpia. *(My mother-in-law says it's mal de ojo, that he needs a limpia.)*
3. —¿Usted cree que es mal de ojo? —No sé, pero por si acaso le pusimos la pulserita roja. *(Do you think it's mal de ojo? —I don't know, but just in case we put the red bracelet on him.)*
4. —Dicen que es mal de ojo porque llora y no duerme. *(They say it's mal de ojo because he cries and doesn't sleep.)*
5. —Para el mal de ojo, mi abuela le pasó un huevo. *(For mal de ojo, my grandmother passed an egg over him.)*
6. —La gente dice que es mal de ojo cuando un niño se enferma de repente. *(People say it's mal de ojo when a child gets sick suddenly.)*
7. —Respeto lo que dice mi mamá, pero también quise que lo revisaran. *(I respect what my mother says, but I also wanted a check-up.)*

55 · «Me sobó una señora»

Literal: A lady rubbed/massaged me — **What they mean:** The patient has been treated by a sobadora — a traditional healer who treats with vigorous massage, often for empacho, sprains and 'tendons out of place'. Ask what was done, respectfully.

Roots: Sobar is to knead, rub or work something soft — the verb used for dough. A sobadora (or sobador) is a traditional practitioner, often a respected older woman, who treats sprains, empacho and sore backs with strong hands and ointments. For many patients she is the first line of care, and her opinion carries weight: 'dijo que traía un tendón movido'. Ask what was done and what changed, without a hint of rivalry — you are collecting history, not competing.
Literal: "A lady rubbed me" — sobar is stronger than 'massage': to work dough, to knead.
Connects: Me puse una ventosa (#57) and me unté una pomada (#58) are the other hands-on home treatments; tengo una bola aquí (#16) is often what gets sobado.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cuénteme qué le hizo la señora y cómo se sintió después. Eso me ayuda a entender cómo ha sido tratada su espalda.» *(Tell me what the lady did and how you felt afterward. That helps me understand how your back has been treated.)*

1. —Me sobó una señora la espalda y me sentí mejor unos días. *(A lady rubbed my back and I felt better for a few days.)*
2. —En mi pueblo hay una señora que soba y compone espaldas. *(In my town there's a lady who rubs people and fixes backs.)*
3. —¿Ha tenido algún tratamiento? —Me sobó una señora, la sobadora. *(Have you had any treatment? —A lady rubbed me, the one who rubs bones.)*
4. —La señora que me sobó dijo que traía un tendón movido. *(The lady who rubbed me said I had a tendon out of place.)*
5. —Me sobaron, pero el dolor me volvió. *(I got rubbed, but the pain came back.)*
6. —Mi mamá siempre nos llevaba a sobar cuando nos caíamos. *(My mother always took us to be rubbed when we fell.)*
7. —La sobada es fuerte, soba con pomada. *(The rubdown is strong, she rubs with ointment.)*

56 · «Tomo té de manzanilla»

Literal: I drink chamomile tea — **What they mean:** Home herbal care — chamomile for stomach, nerves and sleep. Stands in for a whole pharmacy of teas (tila, hierbabuena, árnica). Ask what else is in the home routine; patients may not count teas as 'medicine'.

Roots: Manzanilla is the diminutive of manzana, apple — the flowers smell faintly of apple, and English 'chamomile' carries the same idea from Greek: 'earth apple'. In Mexican homes the tea is a first response to stomach trouble, nerves and sleeplessness. The clinical point is not the herb; it is the category. Patients listing their medicines often omit teas, herbs and home remedies entirely, because 'remedio' and 'medicina' are different drawers. Ask about both drawers, kindly.
Literal: "I drink chamomile tea" — manzanilla means 'little apple', for the apple scent of the flowers.
Connects: Tengo empacho (#52) is its classic indication; me unté una pomada (#58) is the topical counterpart.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Está bien. Además del té, ¿toma algún otro remedio o pastilla, aunque sea de vez en cuando?» *(That's fine. Besides the tea, do you take any other remedy or pill, even from time to time?)*

1. —Tomo té de manzanilla para la panza y para relajarme. *(I drink chamomile tea for my stomach and to relax.)*
2. —Mi esposa me da té de manzanilla cuando no puedo dormir. *(My wife gives me chamomile tea when I can't sleep.)*
3. —¿Toma algo en casa? —Solo té de manzanilla, nada más. *(Do you take anything at home? —Just chamomile tea, nothing else.)*
4. —Tomo té de manzanilla todas las noches para los nervios. *(I drink chamomile tea every night for my nerves.)*
5. —Para el empacho me dieron té de manzanilla con una sobada. *(For the empacho they gave me chamomile tea with a rubdown.)*
6. —Prefiero el té que las pastillas. *(I prefer tea over pills.)*
7. —Tomo té de manzanilla y se me asienta la panza. *(I drink chamomile tea and it settles my stomach.)*

57 · «Me puse una ventosa»

Literal: I put a cupping glass on myself — **What they mean:** Ventosas — cupping: heated glasses or suction cups on the back to 'draw out the aire'. Expect circular marks; patients will explain them before you ask.

Roots: Ventosa is a suction cup — and in older Spanish also a cupping glass — built on viento, wind, from Latin ventus. The logic is pure folk physics: the aire got in (#51), so suction pulls it back out. Cupping came to Mexico through Spanish and older European practice and stayed in the family toolkit. The circular marks can startle an unprepared clinician; the prepared one recognizes them, asks what relief they gave, and folds the answer into the history.
Literal: "I put-on a suction-cup" — ventosa shares its root with viento, wind: the cup that pulls the wind out.
Connects: Tengo un aire (#51) is the condition ventosas exist to treat; the marks and the explanation arrive together.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Se notan las marcas de las ventosas. ¿Le ayudó, y por cuánto tiempo?» *(I can see the marks from the cupping. Did it help you, and for how long?)*

1. —Me puse una ventosa para el aire de la espalda. *(I had cupping done for the aire in my back.)*
2. —Mi tía me puso ventosas y me dejó las marcas. *(My aunt put cupping glasses on me and left marks.)*
3. —¿Ha probado algo? —Ventosas, dos veces. *(Have you tried anything? —Cupping, twice.)*
4. —Dicen que la ventosa saca el aire. *(They say the cupping glass pulls out the aire.)*
5. —Me pusieron ventosas y se me aflojó la espalda. *(I had cupping done and my back loosened up.)*
6. —Las marcas de las ventosas me duraron una semana. *(The marks from the cupping lasted a week.)*
7. —En mi familia se usan las ventosas para el dolor de espalda. *(In my family, cupping is used for back pain.)*

58 · «Me unté una pomada»

Literal: I smeared an ointment on myself — **What they mean:** Topical home treatment — ointments, liniments, 'la pomada que calienta'. Ask which one: ingredients range from harmless rubs to strong counter-irritants, and skin reactions happen.

Roots: Untar is to smear or spread — from Latin unctare, to anoint with oil, which gives English 'unction' and 'ointment' itself through a parallel path. Pomada is from pomo, apple, because early pomades were apple-scented pastes. Every Mexican household seems to keep a pomada — for muscles, bruises, 'aires'. The practical move is identification: market ointments vary enormously, some are strong enough to burn skin (see #34), and patients rarely think of them as treatment worth mentioning until asked.
Literal: "I smeared-myself an ointment" — untar is the verb for spreading butter or grease.
Connects: Me sobó una señora (#55) usually involves a pomada; uso árnica (#59) is the plant-based sibling.

Responde así · Answer like this: «¿Qué pomada usa? Si puede, tráigala la próxima vez para ver qué contiene.» *(Which ointment do you use? If you can, bring it next time so I can see what it contains.)*

1. —Me unté una pomada que me recomendó mi vecina. *(I put on an ointment my neighbor recommended.)*
2. —Me unto pomada en el cuello todas las noches. *(I put ointment on my neck every night.)*
3. —¿Qué se pone? —Una pomada que calienta, del mercado. *(What do you put on it? —An ointment that warms up, from the market.)*
4. —Me unto la pomada y me envuelvo la cintura con un trapo. *(I put on the ointment and wrap my waist with a cloth.)*
5. —La pomada huele fuerte pero calma el dolor. *(The ointment smells strong but it calms the pain.)*
6. —Me unto pomada de árnica para los golpes. *(I put on arnica ointment for bruises.)*
7. —Mi abuela nos untaba pomada para todo. *(My grandmother put ointment on us for everything.)*

59 · «Uso árnica para los golpes»

Literal: I use arnica for blows — **What they mean:** Árnica — the classic Mexican remedy for bruises and bumps, used as tea, tincture or ointment. Mexican árnica is often a local plant (Heterotheca), not European Arnica montana — worth knowing before discussing it.

Roots: Árnica comes from Latin arnica, itself probably from a Greek word for the plant — the name travelled further than the species. In Mexico, 'árnica' usually means Heterotheca inuloides, a local yellow flower used for generations on bruises, while European Arnica montana is a different plant with different cautions. The lesson generalizes: folk remedy names are local. Ask what the plant is and how it is used rather than assuming your pharmacopeia and theirs share a page.
Literal: "I use arnica for the blows" — golpe, a blow, is the everyday word for bumps and bruises.
Connects: Me unté una pomada (#58) is often árnica itself; me corté (#33) and me pegué (#29) are the injuries it is applied to.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Muchas familias usan árnica para los golpes. ¿La usa en té o en pomada, y cada cuándo?» *(Many families use arnica for bruises. Do you use it in tea or in ointment, and how often?)*

1. —Uso árnica para los golpes, en té y en pomada. *(I use arnica for bruises, in tea and in ointment.)*
2. —Me dieron árnica después de la caída. *(They gave me arnica after the fall.)*
3. —¿Toma algún remedio? —Árnica, para la inflamación. *(Do you take any remedy? —Arnica, for the swelling.)*
4. —Uso árnica en la rodilla cuando me golpeo. *(I use arnica on my knee when I bang it.)*
5. —Mi mamá usaba árnica para todos los golpes en la casa. *(My mother used arnica for every bruise in the house.)*
6. —Uso árnica y también me pongo hielo. *(I use arnica and also put ice on it.)*
7. —Venden árnica en el mercado, la de hierba. *(They sell arnica at the market, the herb kind.)*

60 · «Me hicieron una limpia»

Literal: They did a cleansing for me — **What they mean:** A limpia — a spiritual cleansing ritual, often with an egg, herbs, or prayer, performed by a curandera or family elder for susto, mal de ojo, or general malaise. Deeply meaningful to many families.

Roots: Limpia is a cleansing — the word is limpio, clean, from Latin limpidus, clear. In the ritual, a healer passes an egg, herbs or a crucifix over the body while praying, drawing out the susto and the heaviness. It is prayer, touch, attention and family presence in one act — which may be exactly why patients sleep better after it. The clinician's stance costs nothing and buys much: ask about it with genuine interest, record it as care received, and never make the patient choose between their grandmother and you.
Literal: "They made me a cleansing" — limpia from limpio, clean, Latin limpidus, clear as water.
Connects: Dicen que es mal de ojo (#54) and me dio susto (#53) are its two classic indications; ando de los nervios (#61) is the adult state it often treats.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Gracias por contarme. ¿Cómo se sintió después de la limpia? Eso también me dice cómo ha estado respondiendo su cuerpo.» *(Thank you for telling me. How did you feel after the limpia? That also tells me how your body has been responding.)*

1. —Me hicieron una limpia con un huevo, para el susto. *(They did a limpia for me with an egg, for the susto.)*
2. —Mi abuela hace limpias cuando alguien está enfermo. *(My grandmother does limpias when someone is ill.)*
3. —¿Ha hecho algo más? —Me hicieron una limpia la semana pasada. *(Have you done anything else? —They did a limpia for me last week.)*
4. —La limpia se hace con hierbas y oraciones. *(The limpia is done with herbs and prayers.)*
5. —Después de la limpia dormí mejor. *(After the limpia I slept better.)*
6. —Le hicieron una limpia al bebé por el mal de ojo. *(They did a limpia for the baby for mal de ojo.)*
7. —No creo mucho en eso, pero tampoco hace daño. *(I don't fully believe in it, but it doesn't hurt either.)*

61 · «Ando de los nervios»

Literal: I go around of the nerves — **What they mean:** 'Nerves' — anxiety, tension, being on edge, as a bodily state the patient links directly to pain and stiffness. A culturally central idiom of distress, not a dismissal.

Roots: 'Los nervios' is one of the great Latin American idioms of distress — a whole register for anxiety, grief, tension and overwhelm, carried in the body: nerves alterados, attacked nerves, nerves that climb into the neck and shoulders. Anthropologists list it among the classic cultural concepts of distress, precisely because it lets patients speak about emotional suffering in physical, respectable terms. When a patient offers it, they are often telling you the pain has a second engine. Ask about sleep, ánimo, and what is weighing on them.
Literal: "I go-around of-the nerves" — nerves pictured as strings, alterados: tuned wrong, like an instrument.
Connects: Me dio susto (#53) is its acute cause; no dormí nada (#42) is its most common symptom report.

Responde así · Answer like this: «El dolor y los nervios se alimentan el uno al otro; eso le pasa a mucha gente. Cuénteme cómo han estado su sueño y su ánimo.» *(Pain and nerves feed each other; that happens to many people. Tell me how your sleep and your spirits have been.)*

1. —Ando de los nervios, doctor, traigo los nervios alterados. *(I've been very nervous, doctor, my nerves are on edge.)*
2. —Me ganan los nervios y se me contractura el cuello. *(My nerves get to me and my neck gets knotted up.)*
3. —¿Se siente estresado? —Sí, ando de los nervios estas semanas. *(Do you feel stressed? —Yes, I've been all nerves these weeks.)*
4. —Cuando ando de los nervios, me duele todo el cuerpo. *(When I'm nervous, my whole body hurts.)*
5. —Los nervios me empezaron después del accidente. *(My nerves started after the accident.)*
6. —Para los nervios tomo té de tila en la noche. *(For my nerves I drink linden tea at night.)*
7. —Mi esposa dice que ando de los nervios y por eso me duele la espalda. *(My wife says I walk around nervous and that's why my back hurts.)*

62 · «Me untaron VapoRub»

Literal: They smeared VapoRub on me — **What they mean:** Vicks VapoRub — arguably the most beloved home remedy in Mexican households, applied to chest, back, neck, even the feet. Said with affection; it signals a family culture of care.

Roots: VapoRub — the menthol-camphor ointment sold since the early 1900s — holds a place in Mexican family life far beyond its label: grandmothers apply it for colds, aches, congestion and general comfort, sometimes in places no label suggests. Patients name it the way they name relatives. There is a clinical pearl inside the affection: the smell and the rubbing are themselves care, and a patient who reports VapoRub is telling you their home has an active culture of looking after its own. Build on that culture; never sneer at it.
Literal: "They anointed me with VapoRub" — untar again (#58): to smear is to care.
Connects: Me untaron VapoRub is the home application; me siento inflamado (#47) in the chest is a complaint it is often applied to. Both belong to the sobada (#55) world.

Responde así · Answer like this: «El VapoRub es un clásico en muchas casas. Además de eso, ¿usa alguna otra pomada o remedio casero?» *(VapoRub is a classic in many homes. Besides that, do you use any other ointment or home remedy?)*

1. —Mi esposa me untó VapoRub en el pecho y la espalda. *(My wife rubbed VapoRub on my chest and back.)*
2. —En la casa para todo: VapoRub. *(For everything at home: VapoRub.)*
3. —¿Se pone algo? —VapoRub, todas las noches. *(Do you put anything on it? —VapoRub, every night.)*
4. —Me untaban VapoRub de niño y todavía lo uso. *(They rubbed me with VapoRub when I was a child and I still use it.)*
5. —Me pongo VapoRub en el cuello para lo tieso. *(I put VapoRub on my neck for the stiffness.)*
6. —VapoRub y un trapo calientito, ese es mi remedio. *(VapoRub and a warm cloth, that's my remedy.)*
7. —El olor del VapoRub ya me hace sentir mejor. *(The smell of VapoRub already makes me feel better.)*

Chapter 6

Patient Questions and Worries · Preguntas y preocupaciones

Phrases 63–75

63 · «¿Es grave?»

Literal: Is it serious? — **What they mean:** The question underneath most first visits. The patient wants a straight, calm answer — and to know what you found and what you are watching for.

Roots: Grave is Latin gravis, heavy — the root of 'gravity' and 'grievous'. Seriousness, in this old picture, is weight: the patient is asking how heavy this is. It is the most important question in the book, and it deserves a structured answer, not a reflex 'no se preocupe'. Say what you examined, what you found, what it most likely means, and what would change your mind. That structure is reassurance with a spine — honesty the patient can hold onto.
Literal: "Is it grave?" — grave is Latin gravis, heavy: seriousness measured as weight.
Connects: ¿Voy a necesitar cirugía? (#69) is the escalated form; tengo miedo (#67) is the feeling that usually powers it.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Por lo que veo en la revisión de hoy, le voy a explicar exactamente qué encontré, qué sugiere, y qué señales significarían que hay que revisar más.» *(From what I can see in today's exam, I'll explain exactly what I found, what it suggests, and what signs would mean we need to look further.)*

1. —Doctor, dígame la verdad: ¿es grave? *(Doctor, tell me the truth: is it serious?)*
2. —Mi esposa quiere saber si es grave. *(My wife wants to know if it's serious.)*
3. —¿Es grave, o puede esperar a la próxima semana? *(Is it serious, or can it wait until next week?)*
4. —Llevo meses con este dolor, ¿es algo grave? *(I've had this pain for months — is it something serious?)*
5. —¿Es grave que se me duerma el brazo? *(Is it serious that my arm falls asleep?)*
6. —Nadie me ha dicho si es grave. *(Nobody has told me if it's serious.)*
7. —Espero que no sea grave, ese es mi miedo. *(I hope it's not serious, that's my fear.)*

64 · «¿Cuánto tiempo va a durar?»

Literal: How much time is it going to last? — **What they mean:** Prognosis, asked plainly. Patients need a range for work and family planning — give an honest timeframe with the factors that speed or slow recovery, never a guaranteed date.

Roots: Durar is Latin durare, to last or endure — from durus, hard, the root of 'durable' and 'endure'. The patient asking '¿cuánto tiempo?' is rarely asking for a date; they are asking whether they can plan a work season, a trip, a wedding dance. Answer in ranges with conditions: what usually happens, what helps, what delays. A range with honest conditions respects both the patient's planning and the truth — a fixed promise serves neither.
Literal: "How much time will it last?" — durar is Latin durare, to harden and endure: time as something the pain outlasts or doesn't.
Connects: ¿Cuántas sesiones necesito? (#70) is the same question aimed at treatment instead of time; no aguanto el dolor (#12) is often why it is asked.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Cada espalda es diferente, pero le digo el rango normal para lo que usted tiene, y qué cosas ayudan a que mejore más rápido.» *(Every back is different, but I'll tell you the usual range for what you have, and what things help it improve faster.)*

1. —¿Cuánto tiempo va a durar este dolor? *(How long will this pain last?)*
2. —Doctor, ¿cuánto tiempo voy a estar así, sin poder trabajar bien? *(Doctor, how long will I be like this, without being able to work well?)*
3. —¿Va a durar semanas o meses? *(Will it last weeks or months?)*
4. —Mi esposo pregunta cuánto tiempo va a durar esto. *(My husband asks how long this is going to last.)*
5. —La vez pasada, ¿cuánto duró? Esta vez quiero saber. *(The last time, how long did it last? This time I want to know.)*
6. —¿Cuánto tiempo va a durar lo tieso después de la caída? *(How long will the stiffness last after the fall?)*
7. —Dígame más o menos cuánto tiempo, para organizar mi trabajo. *(Tell me more or less how long, so I can plan my work.)*

65 · «¿Puedo seguir trabajando?»

Literal: Can I keep working? — **What they mean:** The livelihood question. Behind it: rent, family, a boss, no sick pay. The useful answer distinguishes full duties, modified duties, and rest — in the patient's real job, not an abstract one.

Roots: Seguir is Latin sequi, to follow — English 'sequence' and 'pursue' share it. '¿Puedo seguir trabajando?' is really 'can my life keep following its course?' For many patients stopping work is not a medical option but an economic impossibility, and a flat 'rest for two weeks' will simply be disobeyed and undisclosed. The workable answer is granular: which tasks, which weights, which postures, for how long — decided with the patient, about their actual job.
Literal: "Can I continue working?" — seguir is Latin sequi, to follow: can I follow my life where it was going?
Connects: Me lastimé trabajando (#32) is this question's origin story; ¿puedo hacer ejercicio? (#71) is the same negotiation at the gym instead of the job.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Platiquemos de su trabajo real: ¿qué carga, cuánto tiempo está parado? Con eso decidimos juntos qué puede hacer y qué conviene pausar.» *(Let's talk about your actual job: what do you lift, how long are you standing? With that, we decide together what you can do and what to pause.)*

1. —¿Puedo seguir trabajando, o tengo que parar? *(Can I keep working, or do I have to stop?)*
2. —Mi trabajo es pesado, doctor, ¿puedo seguir trabajando? *(My job is heavy, doctor — can I keep working?)*
3. —¿Puedo trabajar pero sin cargar peso? *(Can I work but without lifting weight?)*
4. —Si dejo de trabajar, no me pagan. ¿Puedo seguir? *(If I stop working, I don't get paid — can I keep going?)*
5. —¿Puedo seguir trabajando en la oficina, sentado? *(Can I keep working in the office, seated?)*
6. —Mi patrón pregunta si puedo seguir trabajando normal. *(My boss asks if I can keep working normally.)*
7. —¿Puedo seguir trabajando, aunque me duela un poco? *(Can I keep working, even if it hurts a little?)*

66 · «¿Me va a tronar el cuello?»

Literal: Are you going to thunder my neck? — **What they mean:** The adjustment question, in the patient's own word: tronar. Fear, curiosity and video clips all arrive inside it. Consent and explanation live here — describe what you plan, and offer gentler alternatives where they exist.

Roots: The thunder verb returns — but now the patient is asking whether YOU will do the tronando. Behind the question sits everything they have heard: a cousin's success story, a frightening video, a neighbour's warning. This is the consent conversation, and Spanish gives you the words for it: explain first ('antes de cualquier cosa'), name the alternative ('técnicas más suaves'), and hand over the decision ('usted decide'). A patient who chose the adjustment is a different patient from one who endured it.
Literal: "Are you going to thunder my neck?" — the treatment named with the thunder verb from #14.
Connects: Me tronó la espalda (#14) is the sound patients fear you'll reproduce; tengo miedo (#67) is the same worry without the specific scene.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Buena pregunta. Antes de cualquier cosa, le explico qué pienso hacer y por qué, y si prefiere, podemos trabajar con técnicas más suaves. Usted decide.» *(Good question. Before anything, I'll explain what I plan to do and why, and if you prefer, we can work with gentler techniques. You decide.)*

1. —¿Me va a tronar el cuello? Eso me da un poco de miedo. *(Are you going to crack my neck? That scares me a little.)*
2. —Mi primo dice que le tronaron el cuello y le ayudó. *(My cousin says they cracked his neck and it helped him.)*
3. —¿Me va a tronar el cuello, o hay otra manera? *(Are you going to crack my neck, or is there another way?)*
4. —No quiero que me truene el cuello, doctor. *(I don't want my neck cracked, doctor.)*
5. —¿Me va a tronar la espalda como en los videos? *(Are you going to crack my back like in the videos?)*
6. —Si me truena el cuello, ¿me va a doler? *(If you crack my neck, will it hurt?)*
7. —Mi cuello ya truena solo; ¿es malo si usted lo truena? *(My neck already cracks on its own; is it bad if you crack it?)*

67 · «Tengo miedo»

Literal: I have fear — **What they mean:** Fear — of serious disease, of disability, of treatment, of losing work. It often explains late arrival ('esperé meses'). Naming it in the room is the patient's act of trust.

Roots: Spanish does not say 'I am afraid'; it says 'tengo miedo' — I have fear, held like heat or hunger (tener miedo, tener frío, tener hambre). Miedo comes from Latin metus, fear. The grammar is a small mercy: what you have, you can set down. Clinically, this sentence is a door opening — the patient has trusted you with the real chief complaint. The reply that honours it is unhurried: normalize, sequence what happens next, and narrate the exam as you go.
Literal: "I have fear" — Spanish holds fear like an object: tener miedo, like tener hambre, tener frío.
Connects: ¿Es grave? (#63) is its cognitive form; ¿me va a tronar el cuello? (#66) its most specific one. Me dio susto (#53) is fear after an event; this is fear in the room.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Es completamente entendible tener miedo, y qué bueno que vino. Vamos paso a paso: primero lo reviso, y le voy explicando todo lo que encuentre.» *(It's completely understandable to be scared, and I'm glad you came. Let's go step by step: first I'll examine you, and I'll explain everything I find.)*

1. —Tengo miedo, doctor, nunca había sentido este dolor. *(I'm scared, doctor, I've never felt this pain.)*
2. —Tengo miedo de que sea algo malo. *(I'm afraid it's something bad.)*
3. —Tengo miedo de quedarme sin poder caminar. *(I'm afraid of being left unable to walk.)*
4. —¿Es normal tener miedo? —Sí, tengo mucho miedo. *(Don't worry, it's normal to be scared? —Yes, I'm very scared.)*
5. —Tengo miedo del tratamiento, la verdad. *(I'm afraid of the treatment, honestly.)*
6. —Mi miedo es por mis hijos, si algo me pasa. *(My fear is for my children, if something happens to me.)*
7. —Me daba miedo venir, por eso esperé meses. *(I was afraid to come, that's why I waited months.)*

68 · «¿Necesito una radiografía?»

Literal: Do I need an X-ray? — **What they mean:** Imaging expectations — many patients believe an X-ray shows everything, including nerves. The answer explains what imaging can and cannot show, and when it genuinely helps.

Roots: Radiografía is a transparent compound: radio- plus Greek graphia, writing — a picture written with rays. Spanish says 'sacar una radiografía', to take one out, like a photo from a camera. The belief folded into the question is that seeing is knowing — if the nerve is pinched, surely the picture shows it. Your explanation must gently separate the two: what the exam finds, what an image adds, and what no image can show. Patients accept this well when the exam itself was thorough.
Literal: "Do I need a radiography?" — 'sacar una radiografía', to take out an X-ray, as if developing a photograph.
Connects: ¿Voy a necesitar cirugía? (#69) is the intervention feared most; ¿es grave? (#63) is the question the X-ray is meant to answer.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Platiquémoslo: la radiografía muestra bien los huesos, pero no los músculos ni los nervios. Primero lo reviso, y si la revisión lo sugiere, la pedimos.» *(Let's talk about it: an X-ray shows the bones well, but not the muscles or the nerves. First I'll examine you, and if the exam suggests it, we order it.)*

1. —¿Necesito una radiografía? *(Do I need an X-ray, doctor?)*
2. —En el hospital me sacaron radiografías y dijeron que todo estaba bien. *(At the hospital they took X-rays and said everything was fine.)*
3. —¿Necesito una radiografía para saber qué tengo? *(Do I need an X-ray to know what I have?)*
4. —Traje las radiografías del año pasado. *(I brought the X-rays from last year.)*
5. —Mi doctor dijo que necesito una radiografía de la espalda. *(My doctor said I need an X-ray of my back.)*
6. —Si me sacan una radiografía, ¿se va a ver el nervio apretado? *(If I get an X-ray, will the pinched nerve show up?)*
7. —No puedo pagar una radiografía ahorita, ¿es muy necesaria? *(I can't afford an X-ray right now — is it very necessary?)*

69 · «¿Voy a necesitar cirugía?»

Literal: Am I going to need surgery? — **What they mean:** The surgery fear — often the real reason for the visit ('por eso vine aquí'). Answer with what the exam shows, what conservative care can address, and which signs would make referral the right step.

Roots: Cirugía is Greek kheirourgia — kheir, hand, plus ergon, work: surgery is hand-work, a definition a manual practitioner can appreciate. The question usually arrives with a story attached: a neighbour who 'quedó peor', a hospital corridor conversation. Patients asking it are often asking for a path that is not surgery, and for honesty about the paths that are. Both halves matter: what conservative care can genuinely address, and the specific signs that would make you the one to recommend the surgical opinion.
Literal: "Will I go to need surgery?" — cirugía is Greek kheirourgia, hand-work: surgery as the work of hands.
Connects: ¿Es grave? (#63) is the parent question; ¿puedo seguir trabajando? (#65) is what patients ask while hoping to avoid this one.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Con lo que encontré hoy, le explico qué podemos trabajar aquí, y con honestidad, en qué casos yo recomendaría una opinión quirúrgica.» *(With what I found today, I'll explain what we can work on here, and honestly, in which cases I would recommend a surgical opinion.)*

1. —¿Voy a necesitar cirugía? *(Am I going to need surgery, doctor?)*
2. —En el hospital mencionaron cirugía y me asusté. *(At the hospital they mentioned surgery and I got scared.)*
3. —A mi vecino lo operaron de la espalda y quedó peor, ¿yo voy a necesitar cirugía? *(My neighbour had back surgery and ended up worse — will I need it?)*
4. —¿La cirugía es la única solución para esto? *(Is surgery the only solution for this?)*
5. —Quiero evitar la cirugía, por eso vine aquí. *(I want to avoid surgery, that's why I came here.)*
6. —Si no me opero, ¿voy a empeorar? *(If I don't have surgery, will I get worse?)*
7. —Me dijeron que necesito cirugía de la rodilla, pero quiero otra opinión. *(They told me I need surgery on my knee, but I want another opinion.)*

70 · «¿Cuántas sesiones necesito?»

Literal: How many sessions do I need? — **What they mean:** Treatment-plan expectations — time, money and insurance all inside one question. Answer with a plan and a review point: what you'll reassess, and when, rather than a bare number.

Roots: Sesión is Latin sessio, a sitting — the same root as 'session' and 'sedentary'. The question is never only arithmetic; it is 'how much of my money, my bus rides, my work hours will this take?' The answer that respects all three is a plan with a checkpoint: a starting phase, a date to measure progress honestly, and shared decision points. Patients who hear a review date hear something else too — that you will not keep them coming forever without evidence it is helping.
Literal: "How many sessions do I need?" — sesión from Latin sessio, a sitting: each visit a sitting with the problem.
Connects: ¿Cuánto tiempo va a durar? (#64) measures the same uncertainty in weeks instead of visits; ¿puedo seguir trabajando? (#65) is the constraint the plan must fit.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Le propongo un plan con fecha de revisión: empezamos, y en esa fecha medimos cómo va y decidimos juntos si seguir, espaciar las visitas o cambiar el plan.» *(I'll propose a plan with a review date: we start, and on that date we measure how you're doing and decide together whether to continue, space visits out, or change the plan.)*

1. —¿Cuántas sesiones necesito, más o menos? *(How many sessions do I need, more or less?)*
2. —Doctor, ¿cuántas veces tengo que venir? *(Doctor, how many times do I have to come?)*
3. —¿Con dos sesiones será suficiente? *(With two sessions will it be enough?)*
4. —¿Cuántas sesiones para el cuello, en su experiencia? *(How many sessions for the neck, in your experience?)*
5. —Puedo venir dos veces por semana, ¿cuántas sesiones serían en total? *(I can come twice a week — how many sessions would that be in total?)*
6. —Mi seguro cubre algunas sesiones, ¿cuántas necesito? *(My insurance covers some sessions, how many do I need?)*
7. —Dígame con honestidad cuántas sesiones, para planear el gasto. *(Tell me honestly how many sessions, so I can plan the expense.)*

71 · «¿Puedo hacer ejercicio?»

Literal: Can I do exercise? — **What they mean:** Activity guidance — the patient wants specifics: walking, soccer, weights, swimming. Distinguish movement that helps from loading that provokes, in terms of their actual routine.

Roots: Ejercicio is Latin exercitium — practice, training, from exercere, to keep busy at work. Patients ask the question in the binary: exercise or total rest. Modern back care answers in the middle, and Spanish gives you the frame: 'el detalle está en cuál y cuánto'. Ask about their real routine — the Sunday soccer, the morning walk, the gym — because advice fitted to a real routine gets followed, and advice fitted to an imaginary one gets framed and forgotten.
Literal: "Can I do exercise?" — ejercicio from Latin exercitium, practice: exercise as rehearsal for ordinary life.
Connects: ¿Puedo seguir trabajando? (#65) is the same question with wages at stake; me jalé un músculo (#38) is how gym answers sometimes begin.

Responde así · Answer like this: «El movimiento en general ayuda; el detalle está en cuál y cuánto. Dígame qué ejercicio hace, y lo ajustamos juntos por ahora.» *(Movement generally helps; the detail is in what kind and how much. Tell me what exercise you do, and we'll adjust it together for now.)*

1. —¿Puedo hacer ejercicio, o debo guardar reposo total? *(Can I exercise, or should I rest completely?)*
2. —¿Puedo seguir caminando en las mañanas? *(Can I keep walking in the mornings?)*
3. —Juego fútbol los domingos, ¿puedo hacer ejercicio así? *(I play soccer on Sundays — can I exercise like that?)*
4. —¿Puedo hacer ejercicio con pesas ligeras? *(Can I exercise with light weights?)*
5. —Mi entrenador dice que puedo hacer ejercicio, ¿usted qué dice? *(My trainer says I can exercise; what do you say?)*
6. —¿Puedo nadar? Me dijeron que nadar es bueno para la espalda. *(Can I swim? They told me swimming is good for the back.)*
7. —¿Cuándo puedo hacer ejercicio otra vez como antes? *(When can I exercise again like before?)*

72 · «¿Por qué me duele si no me pegué?»

Literal: Why does it hurt if I didn't hit myself? — **What they mean:** The no-accident puzzle — pain without an event feels illogical and a little frightening to patients. The answer explains accumulation: posture, load, sleep, stress, small strains adding up.

Roots: The patient's reasoning is impeccable: pain should have a cause, and a blow is the visible kind. What they have not been given is the other model — accumulation. Spanish helps you name it: 'cargas pequeñas que se van sumando', small loads that keep adding up, from the same cargar family as #30's heavy box. The heavy box is one load; a thousand days of the wrong chair is the same load paid in instalments. Patients find this model relieving, because it makes their pain logical again.
Literal: "Why does it hurt-me if I didn't hit-myself?" — the patient's logic is sound; the missing piece is accumulation.
Connects: Siento un nervio apretado (#24) is the folk-mechanical answer patients reach for; ¿es grave? (#63) is what they ask next when the puzzle worries them.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Buena pregunta. Muchos dolores de espalda no vienen de un solo golpe, sino de muchas cargas pequeñas que se van sumando: la postura, el trabajo, el sueño. Vamos a buscar cuáles son las suyas.» *(Good question. Many back pains don't come from one blow, but from many small loads adding up — posture, work, sleep. Let's look for which ones are yours.)*

1. —¿Por qué me duele si no me pegué ni me caí? *(Why does it hurt if I didn't hit myself or fall?)*
2. —Me empezó a doler de la nada, ¿por qué? *(It started hurting out of nowhere — why?)*
3. —No hice nada diferente y aun así me duele la espalda, ¿por qué? *(I didn't do anything different and still my back hurts, why?)*
4. —¿Por qué me duele el cuello si trabajo sentado? *(Why does my neck hurt if I work sitting down?)*
5. —¿Por qué me duele más ahora que cuando me lastimé? *(Why does it hurt more now than when I hurt myself?)*
6. —Mi papá pregunta por qué me duele si no hubo golpe. *(My father asks why it hurts if there was no blow.)*
7. —¿Por qué me vuelve el dolor cada ciertos meses? *(Why does the pain come back every few months?)*

73 · «¿Esto es de la edad?»

Literal: Is this from age? — **What they mean:** Attribution to aging — sometimes acceptance, sometimes a protest ('no quiero nada más aceptar'). The answer separates what age changes from what can still improve.

Roots: Edad is Latin aetas, age or lifetime — 'medieval' is the middle aetas. '¿Es de la edad?' is a question with two opposite hearts: resignation ('at my age, what do you expect') and resistance ('no quiero nada más aceptar que es la edad'). Families often deliver the resignation version on the patient's behalf. The honest answer splits the difference: some tissues do change with decades, and strength, movement and habits remain improvable at every age — which parts are which is what the exam is for.
Literal: "Is this of the age?" — edad from Latin aetas, a lifetime: the question is whether the calendar is the diagnosis.
Connects: Me dan muchos dolores de cabeza (#49) and se me hinchan los pies (#48) get filed under this same heading by their owners.

Responde así · Answer like this: «La edad cambia algunas cosas, es cierto, pero no todo es la edad. Por la revisión, le digo qué podemos mejorar todavía y qué cuidamos tal como está.» *(Age changes some things, it's true, but not everything is age. From the exam, I'll tell you what we can still improve and what we take care of as it is.)*

1. —¿Esto es de la edad, doctor? *(Is this because of my age, doctor?)*
2. —Me dicen que a mi edad, estos dolores son normales. *(They tell me that at my age, these aches are normal.)*
3. —¿Es la edad, o es otra cosa? *(Is it age, or is it something else?)*
4. —Mi mamá tenía lo mismo a mi edad. *(My mother had the same thing at my age.)*
5. —No quiero nada más aceptar que es la edad. *(I don't want to just accept that it's my age.)*
6. —¿Lo que me cruje en las rodillas es de la edad? *(Is the cracking in my knees because of age?)*
7. —Dicen que es la edad, pero yo me siento fuerte en lo demás. *(They say it's age, but I feel strong otherwise.)*

74 · «¿Me puedo tomar algo para el dolor?»

Literal: Can I take myself something for the pain? — **What they mean:** Medication questions — including the confessions: pharmacy pills taken on their own, a neighbour's pills, pills 'para la presión'. Answer within scope: general information, encourage checking with their physician or pharmacist, and always ask what they're already taking.

Roots: Tomar covers taking medicine, drinking tea and catching a bus — one verb for everything you take in. The question sounds simple and hides a crowd: the pharmacy pills bought without prescription, the neighbour's stronger pills, the blood-pressure medicine that interacts. Your scope as a chiropractor is information and referral, not prescribing, and the model reply shows the shape: inventory first, honesty about scope, and a clear pointer to the physician or pharmacist. Patients respect the boundary when it is explained as care, not as refusal.
Literal: "Can I take-myself something?" — tomarse algo is the everyday verb for pills, teas and remedies alike (#56).
Connects: Me quemé (#34) with a heating pad and ando estreñido (#46) from pain pills are the two home-medication stories to ask about; uso árnica (#59) is the remedy drawer to check alongside.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Antes de responderle, dígame todo lo que ya está tomando, incluyendo pastillas de farmacia y remedios. Para medicamentos, lo más seguro es consultarlo con su médico o farmacéutico, y yo anoto lo que me diga.» *(Before answering, tell me everything you're already taking, including pharmacy pills and remedies. For medicines, the safest step is to check with your doctor or pharmacist, and I'll note what you tell me.)*

1. —¿Me puedo tomar algo para el dolor? *(Can I take something for the pain?)*
2. —He estado tomando pastillas de la farmacia por mi cuenta. *(I've been taking pills from the pharmacy on my own.)*
3. —¿Me puedo tomar algo más fuerte? Esto no me quita el dolor. *(Can I take something stronger? This doesn't take the pain away.)*
4. —Mi vecina me dio unas pastillas para el dolor. *(My neighbour gave me some pills for the pain.)*
5. —¿Me puedo tomar algo, o hace daño con mis otras medicinas? *(Can I take something, or is it bad with my other medicines?)*
6. —Tomo algo para la presión, ¿puedo tomar pastillas para el dolor? *(I take something for the pressure — can I take pain pills?)*
7. —¿Me puedo tomar algo antes del trabajo para que no me duela? *(Can I take something before work so it doesn't hurt?)*

75 · «¿Y si no se me quita?»

Literal: And if it doesn't take itself off me? — **What they mean:** The deepest worry in the book: permanence. The honest answer has three parts — what improvement usually looks like, the review point, and the promise of referral if progress stalls. Never a guarantee; always a plan.

Roots: Quitar is to remove or take away — quitarse is what pain refuses to do in the patient's fear: pain as a garment the body will not take off, a guest who will not leave. This is the question the whole book walks toward, and it deserves the most careful answer of all: no promises you cannot keep, but a visible road — review, adjust, refer — and the assurance that stalling is information, not abandonment. Patients can live with uncertainty; what they cannot live with is feeling dropped.
Literal: "And if it doesn't remove-itself from-me?" — quitarse pictures pain as clothing the body might never take off.
Connects: Tengo miedo (#67) is the emotion inside it; ¿cuánto tiempo va a durar? (#64) is its practical form. Answer both layers.

Responde así · Answer like this: «Entonces no nos quedamos ahí: revisamos qué cambió, ajustamos el plan, y si necesita otro especialista, se lo digo con honestidad y le ayudo a dar ese paso. No se va a quedar sin camino.» *(Then we don't stop there: we review what changed, adjust the plan, and if you need another specialist, I'll tell you honestly and help you take that step. You won't be left without a path.)*

1. —¿Y si no se me quita, doctor? ¿Qué sigue? *(And if it doesn't go away, doctor? What then?)*
2. —Ya hice de todo y no se me quita. *(I've done everything and it doesn't go away.)*
3. —¿Y si el dolor no se quita con esto, hay otra cosa? *(And if the pain doesn't go away with this, is there something else?)*
4. —Mi miedo es: ¿y si nunca se me quita? *(My fear is: what if it never goes away?)*
5. —¿Y si no se me quita, tengo que vivir así? *(And if it doesn't go away, do I have to live like this?)*
6. —Llevo años y no se me quita por completo. *(I've had it for years and it doesn't go away completely.)*
7. —¿Y si no se me quita, usted me manda con otro doctor? *(What if it doesn't go away — do you send me to another doctor?)*