

# Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

## This week: Words about health and healing

病

(radical 疒 *bing* = illness)

Pronunciation: *beng* (Putonghua, 6<sup>th</sup> tone), *beng* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)

Basic meaning: illness, disease

病了 (*bing le* = ill~already) = 生病 (*sheng bing* = grow~ill) = fall ill. We console friends down with 感冒 (*gan mao* = influenza): “小病是福! (*xiao bing shi fu* = slight~illness-is~blessing — lets you rest). Soon you'll 病好 (*bing hao* = ill~well = recover).”

傳染病 (*chuan ran bing* = pass~catch~illnesses) = infectious diseases: 鼠疫 (*shu yi* = rats-epidemic = Black Death), 愛滋病 (*ai zi bing* = AIDS-transliterated~disease). 病人 (*bing ren* = ill~person = patients) carrying 病毒 (*bing du* = disease~poison = viruses) may 病死 (*bing si* = ill~die).

Pathological gamblers are 病態賭徒 (*bing tai du tu* = sick~condition~gamble~person). Misunderstandings make people develop 心病 (*xin bing* = heart~disease = grudges).

by Diana Yue