

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 drugs

藥

Pronunciation: *yao* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *yeuk* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: medicine, drug

藥廠 (*yao chang* = drug companies) manufacture 藥品 (*yao pin* = medicine/pharmaceutical-products). 藥劑師 (*yao ji shi* = medicine-portion-master = pharmacists) 配藥 (*pei yao* = assemble/prepare-medicine/prescriptions). Patients 服藥 (*fu yao* = swallow-medicine). 止痛藥 (*zhi tong yao* = stop-pain-medicine) = pain-killers, 避孕丸 (*bi yun wan* = avoid-pregnant-pills) = contraceptives, 偉哥 (*wei ge* = strong-build-guy) = “Viagra”-transliterated.

中醫 (*Zhong yi* = Chinese-medicine/doctor)s' principle is 固本培元 (*gu ben pei yuan* = firm-up-fundamentals-nurture-essence = strengthen body's basics). Patients drink 中藥 (*Zhong yao* = Chinese-medicine = 草藥 *cao yao* = grass/herbal-medicine) concoctions, rub 藥酒 (*yao jiu* = medicine-soaked-liquor) on wounds/swellings.

良藥苦口 (*liang yao ku kou* = good-medicine-bitter-mouth) means good advice is unpleasant/hard to swallow.