

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

Pronunciation: *yīn* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *yīn* (Cantonese, 5th tone)
Basic meaning: addiction, craving

癮 (radical 疒 = 病 *bīng* = illness) is unhealthy: 上癮 (*shàng yīn* = up/on~addiction = becoming addicted), 大癮 (*dà yīn* = big~addiction = heavily addicted). Gamblers having 賭癮 (*dù yīn* = gamble~addiction), 麻雀癮 (*má què yīn* = “mahjong”~addiction) 戒賭 (*jiè dǔ* = give-up~gambling) by 斬手指 (*zhǎn shǒu zhǐ* = chop-off~hand's~finger).

酒癮 (*jiǔ yīn* = liquor~addiction) = alcoholism. 癮君子 (*yīn jūn zǐ* = addicted~gentlemen) means drug addicts. 香煙 (*xiāng yān* = fragrant~smoke = cigarette) smokers have 煙癮 (*yān yīn* = smoking~urges/cravings). Opium-smokers get spasms/tremors/attacks if 吊癮 (*diào yīn* = suspend~craving = cravings not satisfied).

“過癮!” (*guò yūn* = enjoy~craving/excitement) means “Cool!” “冇癮!” (*mò yūn* = no~craving/excitement) means “How disappointing!”

by Diana Yue