

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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about obesity



Putonghua pronunciation: *rou4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yuk6*

Meanings: flesh, meat

肉體 (*rou4 ti3* = flesh~body) means physical body. Prostitutes 賣肉 (*mai4 rou4* = sell~flesh/body). Children are parents' 骨肉 (*gu3 rou4* = bone~flesh = flesh and blood).

Butchers sell 肥肉 (*fei2 rou4* = fatty~meat), 瘦肉 (*shou4 rou4* = lean~meat). Eateries serve 肉包子 (*rou4 bao1 zi0* = meat~wrap~diminutive = meat buns). 食肉獸 (*shi2 rou4 shou4* = eat~meat~beast) means carnivores or big steak-eaters.

Voluptuous women are 肉感 (*rou4 gan3* = flesh~feel = attractively fleshy), 珠圓玉潤 (*zhu1 yuan2 yu4 run4* = pearl~round~jade~luscious = lusciously plump). Obese people have 贅肉 (*zhui4 rou4* = superfluous~flesh), large 三圍 (*san1 wei2* = three~surround = top, middle, bottom measurements). 賤肉橫生 (*jian4 rou4 heng2 sheng1* = cheap~flesh~horizontal~grow) describes ugly flesh bulging.

by Diana Yue