

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

防

Pronunciation: *fang* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *fong* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: defend, guard, protect, prevent

防 = 防衛 (*fang wei* = defend-guard), 防線 (*fang xian* = defense-lines). 防空洞 (*fang kong dong* = protect-air-raid-holes/caves) = air-raid shelters. 防毒面罩 (*fang du mian zao* = prevent-toxic-gas-face-cover) = gas masks. Terrorist attacks are 防不勝防 (*fang bu sheng fang* = protect-not-succeed-protect = never completely detectable/avoidable).

In summer, housewives spray 防蟲劑 (*fang cong ji* = prevent-bugs-medicine = insect detergents), swimmers rub 防曬油 (*fang shai you* = protect-from-sunlight-oil = sunburn lotion), 護士 (*hu shi* = protect-scholar = nurses) 打防疫針 (*da fang yi zhen* = hit-prevent-epidemic-needle = perform anti-infections injections).

“上醫治未病” (*shang yi zhi wei bing* = top/best-doctors-heal-not-yet-ill) means the best doctors treat you before you become ill.

by Diana Yue