

Character Builder 您好學？

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 cosmetic surgery

脂

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji1*

Meaning: fat

脂 (radical 月 = 肉 rou4, flesh/meat) = fat: 松脂 (*song1 zhi1* = pine-fat/resin), 油脂 (*you2 zhi1* = oily-fat/grease). Tyrants exploit 民脂民膏 (*min2 zhi1 min2 gao1* = people's-fat-people's-lard = public coffers).

飽和脂肪 (*bao3 he2 zhi1 fang2* = saturated-fat-belly-fat = saturated-fats) exceed 不飽和脂肪 (*bu4 bao3 he2 zhi1 fang2* = unsaturated-fats) in calorie-content. 脂肪瘤 (*zhi1 fang2 liu2* = fatty-lump/tumour) = lipoma.

Model fears 脂肪過多 (*zhi1 fang2 guo4 duo1* = fat-belly-fat-pass-much = excessive fat), jogs to 燒脂 (*shao1 zhi1* = burn-away-fat), takes 抽脂 (*chou1 zhi1* = suction-assisted-fat-removal = lipoplasty/"lipo") operation. 胭脂 (*yan1 zhi0* = red-fat = rouge) brightens her 羊脂白玉 (*yang2 zhi1 bai2 yu4* = lamb's-fat/lard-white-jade = creamy-white) complexion.

by Diana Yue