

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 medication effects

痛

Putonghua pronunciation: *tong4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tung3*

Meanings: ache, pain, ailing, sorrow, violent, hearty, unrestrained

痛 (radical 疒 *chuang2*, illness) means 痛苦 (*tong4 ku3* = physical/mental pain~suffering): 疼痛 (*teng2 tong4* = ache~pain), 傷痛 (*shang1 tong4* = hurt~pain/sorrow), 痛哭 (*tong4 ku1* = unrestrained~wailing). Lads 痛打 (*tong4 da3* = thoroughly~beat-up) bully, feel 痛快 (*tong1 kuai4* = heartily~cheered).

止痛藥 (*zhi3 tong4 yao4* = stop~pain~medicine = pain-killers) can 鎮痛 (*zhen4 tong4* = suppress~pain): 頭疼 (*tou2 teng3* = head-ache), 胃疼 (*wei4 teng3* = stomach-ache), 經痛 (*jing1 tong4* = menstrual-pain).

痛風 (*tong4 feng1* = pain~wind) = gout. 隱隱作痛 (*yin3 in3 zuo2 tong4* = faintly~faintly~produce~pain) = feel dull pain. However, 隱痛 (*yin3 tong4* = hidden-pain) means unspeakable/unspoken sorrow. 痛定思痛 (*tong4 ding4 si1 tong4* = pain~calm~think/reflect~pain) describes hurt/defeated person reviewing painful experience.