Character Builder 您好嗎？水

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 hungry stomach

渴
Putonghua pronunciation: ke3
Cantonese pronunciation: hot3
Meaning: thirsty, yearn for

渴 (radical 水 = water shui3, water) means 口渴 (kou3 ke3 = mouth-thirsty = thirst). Traveller crossing desert must 喝水 (he1 shui3 = drinking-water) to 止渴 (zhi3 ke3 = stop-thirst), 解渴 (jie3 ke3 = relieve-thirst), otherwise may 渴壊 (ke3 huai4 = thirsty-bad/ruined = be badly hurt by thirst), 渴死 (ke3 si3 = thirst-die = die of thirst).

Famished person feels 饥渴 (ji1 ke3 = hunger-and-thirst). 饥渴慕義 (ji1 ke3 mu4 yi4 = hungry-thirst-adore-righteousness) = hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Widow feeling 性饑渴 (xing4 ji1 ke3 = sexually-hungry-thirsty = unsatiated sexual desires) 渴望 (ke3 wang4 = thirst-hope = yearns to) re-marry.

臨渴掘井 (lin2 ke2 jue2 jing3 = upon-thirst-dig-well) means making belated efforts to solve problem.