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 dieting

胃 Pronunciation: wei (Putonghua, 4th tone), wai (Cantonese, 6th tone)  
Basic meaning: stomach

胃 = 胃囊 (wei nang = stomach-pouch). 腸胃 (chang wei = intestines-stomach) = digestive system. 胃液 (wei yi = stomach-fluid/acid) = gastric juice. 大胃口 (da wei kou = big-stomach-mouth/opening) means big appetite for food/money/claims. 開胃 (kai wei = open-stomach) describes hungry eaters or appetizing food.


Figuratively speaking, people 反胃 (fan wei = reverse-stomach = throw up) over repulsive words/sights.

by Diana Yue