SAYMEI · EVERYDAY CHINESE · CHEAT SHEET

How to Say Bless You in Chinese

Mandarin has no set phrase for bless you. After a sneeze most people say nothing, and friends ask 没事吧 (méi shì ba), you OK? Here's what people really say, what family says to a sneezing child, and what to say when you sneeze.



没事吧 — méi shì ba You OK?

Sounds like may shir bah. méi rises: 2nd tone, shì falls: 4th tone, ba light: neutral tone. When you're the one who sneezed: 不好意思 (bù hǎoyìsi), Excuse me.

What fits after a sneeze?

A friend sneezes	没事吧? Méi shì ba? You OK?
They keep sneezing	你感冒了吗？多喝点热水。 Nǐ gǎnmào le ma? Duō hē diǎn rè shuǐ. Do you have a cold? Drink some hot water.
A small child sneezes	长命百岁！ Cháng mìng bǎi suì! Live to a hundred!
A colleague with a cold	注意身体啊。 Zhùyì shēntǐ a. Take care of yourself.
You sneezed	不好意思。 Bù hǎoyìsi. Excuse me.

9 things people say instead of bless you

CHECKING ON SOMEONE WHO SNEEZES

没事吧 méi shì ba You OK? EVERYDAY

你感冒了吗 nǐ gǎnmào le ma Do you have a cold? EVERYDAY

保重 bǎozhòng Take care POLITE

注意身体 zhùyì shēntǐ Look after your health POLITE

OTHER KINDS OF "BLESS YOU"

老天保佑 lǎotiān bǎoyòu Heaven help us; fingers crossed CASUAL

上帝保佑 Shàngdì bǎoyòu God bless FORMAL

WHAT FAMILY SAYS

小心别感冒了 xiǎoxīn bié gǎnmào le Careful not to catch a cold WARM

多喝点热水 duō hē diǎn rè shuǐ Drink some hot water WARM

长命百岁 cháng mìng bǎi suì Live to a hundred WARM

What to say back

我没事 wǒ méi shì I'm fine EVERYDAY

不好意思 bù hǎoyìsi Excuse me EVERYDAY

可能是过敏 kěnéng shì guòmǐn It's probably allergies EVERYDAY

BETWEEN FRIENDS

A: 没事吧? Méi shì ba? You OK?

B: 没事，可能是过敏。 Méi shì, kěnéng shì guòmǐn. I'm fine, probably allergies.

AT HOME

A: 你感冒了吧？多喝点热水！ Nǐ gǎnmào le ba? Duō hē diǎn rè shuǐ! You've caught a cold, haven't you? Drink some hot water!

B: 知道了，妈。 Zhīdào le, mā. I know, Mom.

AT WORK

A: 不好意思。 Bù hǎoyìsi. Excuse me.

B: 没关系，注意身体。 Méi guānxi, zhùyì shēntǐ. No worries. Take care of yourself.

What to avoid, and why

- × Don't translate bless you word for word. 上帝保佑你 (Shàngdì bǎoyòu nǐ) is a religious blessing and sounds strange after a sneeze.
- × Don't wait for a bless you when you sneeze. If nobody says anything, they aren't being rude. It's simply not the custom.
- × Don't sneeze into the air at a shared table. Turn away, cover it with your elbow and say 不好意思 (bù hǎoyìsi) to the people near you.

Hear every phrase and take the quiz: **saymei.app/tools/bless-you-in-chinese**
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